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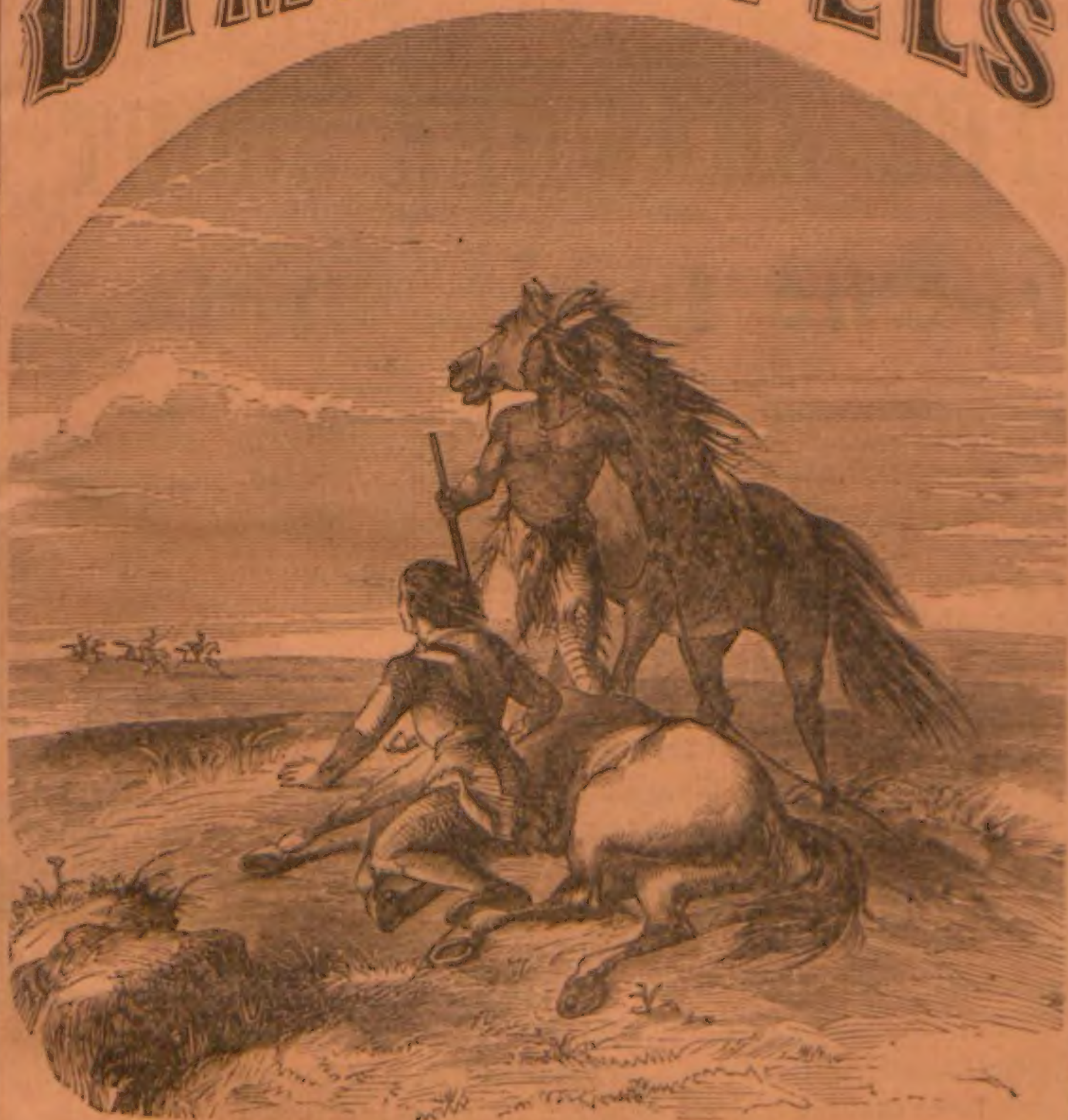
No.

BEADLE'S

Novels Series.

196.

DIME NOVELS



EAGLE PLUME:

The White Avenger.

BEADLE AND COMPANY, 98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y.

Am. News Co., 119 & 121 Nassau St., N. Y.

A Romance of the "Dark and Bloody Ground!"

Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 197,

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OR,

The Death Trail.

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EAGLE PLUME,



WADSWORTH & COMPANY, PRINTERS,



EAGLE PLUME,

THE

WHITE AVENGER.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "THE RED COYOTE," "THE WHITE VULTURE," ETC.

NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,

98 WILLIAM STREET.

BEADLE PLUMER

THE

WHITE AVENGER.

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(No. 196.)

BY ALBERT W. ALLEN,

Author of "The Olden Days," "The Olden Days," "The Olden Days," etc.

NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS.

20 NASSAU STREET.

EAGLE PLUME, THE WHITE AVENGER.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADOPTED SON OF THE DACOTAHS.

ON the west bank of the north fork of the Green river, lay the principal village of the Dacotahs—the warlike nation that roams from the great valley of the Salt Lake to the iron-like barriers of the Rocky Mountains.

'Twas in the pleasant spring-time ; the snows of the previous winter, melting in the mountain gulches, swelled the streamlets rushing down to the plain.

The young grass was springing fresh and green on the broad surface of the prairie.

The braves of the Dacotahs were preparing for their usual spring hunt southward. The long scalping-knives were sharpened, the bows new strung with the sinews of deer or mountain elk, and those of the red warriors who were fortunate enough to possess a rifle or carbine, carefully polished it up with patches of deer-skin. All was bustle and activity in the Indian village.

By the river's bank, gazing upon the turbid and swollen waters, stood two chiefs. One, by the richness of his attire, the wolf-tails attached to his leggins—a mark of distinction only allowed to great braves—it was evident was a chief of note ; and the eagle-plumes thickly braided in his long, dark locks, as well as the look of dignity and pride upon his thoroughly Indian face, confirmed this supposition.

His companion was not quite so tall, nor was his attire so rich.

The two were the chief of the Dacotahs, Hole-in-the-sky, and his brother, the Black-pan.

The two chiefs were looking down the river anxiously, as though expecting some one.

"Wah!" said Hole-in-the-sky, breaking the silence, "Yellow Wolf is not a snake; he flies like the eagle, yet he comes not from the pale-face lodges by the Great Salt Lake."

"A moon has come and gone; the Dacotah chief will be here before the young moon comes," replied the younger chief, in a tone of conviction.

"Wah, it is good!" sententiously exclaimed the great chief; "then we shall know whether it is peace or war."

"And if it is war?"

"The Dacotahs will drive the white-skins into the lake! Wah-con-dah loves his red children; the valley of the Salt Lake is theirs. If the white-skins stay, they must pay tribute to the braves of the Dacotah."

"See!" exclaimed the Black-pan, pointing to two little black specks advancing from the southward; "the Dacotah chief comes."

Hole-in-the-sky bent his keen glance in the direction indicated by the outstretched finger.

The two black specks were advancing rapidly across the swells of the distant prairie, and were looming up larger and larger every moment.

"Wah!" cried the chief, with an air of satisfaction; "it is the chief. And the other?"

"One of the white braves," returned the Black-pan.

The two horsemen advanced rapidly; one was a red-skin, the other a white. They rode directly for the two chiefs by the bank of the river.

Within a hundred paces of the two chiefs, the white man drew rein and halted; the red-skin continued on his course, and dismounted by the side of the chiefs.

The new-comer was a tall, muscular-formed brave, decked out in a complete deer-skin hunting-garb. He, too, wore the wolf-tails on his leggins, and well had he deserved that mark of honor, for the Yellow Wolf was one of the greatest braves of the Dacotah nation. Though young in years, he was equally renowned in the council-lodge and on the war-path; wise in deliberation, sagacious in thought, prompt in action, and untiring on the trail. Young as he was, he had won

a name among the braves of his tribe that few could match and all envied.

Thus it was that the Yellow Wolf came to be chosen by the Hole-in-the-sky as envoy to the lodges of the white braves by the big Salt Lake.

"My brother has come," said the great chief.

"Yes," responded the new-comer.

"My brother has been to the white lodges?"

"Yes."

"He has talked with the white chiefs?"

"Yes; the white braves are not like the chiefs in the mountains that dig in the earth—not like the white braves that carry short rifles," (the U. S. cavalry). "The braves by the big Salt Lake hate the pale-faces beyond the mountains," and the red-skin waved his long arm toward the east. "The white chiefs have many squaws—three, four, ten, twenty to each brave. The name of their tribe is Mormon."

The chiefs listened in astonishment to this strange tale. The custom of this new tribe of pale-faces was strange to them.

"Will the white chiefs pay the tribute?" asked the Hole-in-the-sky.

"No!" was the laconic answer.

"No!" echoed the great chief, an expression of astonishment appearing on his usually stolid features.

"No," again repeated the Yellow Wolf; "the Mormon chief says his warriors will not come east of the mountains—they will not disturb the hunting-grounds of the Dacotahs, but settle by the big Salt Lake. All they ask is a free passage through our country; if we refuse, they will fight their way through."

The eyes of the great chief sparkled with anger when he heard this bold defiance.

"Does the white chief know that the braves of the Dacotah are like the blades of grass on the prairie?—that they are the great fighting men of the big mountains? Wah! the braves of the Dacotahs will take the scalps of the white-skins and they shall dry by the lodge-pole of the red-men."

"The white-skins are many; they have big rifles, big as themselves, which shine like the yellow water when the sun

kisses it. The white chiefs are poor—no plunder—no blankets—no horses—very poor but big in courage. We fight them, gain nothing but scalps. Best fight the pale-faces in the mountains, who dig; they have many blankets—rich,” replied the Yellow Wolf, sagely.

The great chief was silent for a moment; he attached great weight to the words of the Yellow Wolf, whom he knew to be as brave as he was wise. Why should the Dacotahs attack a foe on the west, from whom, as the chief had said, they could gain nothing but scalps, when they could pillage a foe on the east who was rich in all those worldly goods that were dear to the red-man's heart?

Besides, too, the chief remembered that, when first a young brave on the war-path, the Dacotahs attacked a big white lodge on the north fork of the Platte river; he remembered how the big rifles that shone like gold sent twenty of the Dacotahs to the happy hunting-grounds at a single discharge. He had little wish to again face the big yellow guns of the white-skins.

“Wah! my brother talks straight. The Yellow Wolf is a great chief of the Dacotahs; his tongue is not forked. My brother thinks that it will be better not to fight the white chiefs who are of the Mormon tribe?”

“Yes; the red warriors will make little now. Wait till the pale-faces get blankets, horses; then fight,” said the wily savage; “is it good?”

“It is good,” replied the great chief; then he turned to the Black-pan. “Summon my warriors to the council.”

Black-pan at once departed on his mission.

“The Yellow Wolf shall tell the braves of the Dacotahs what he saw in the lodges of the white chiefs who have many wives; they will listen to his words and heed his counsel.”

The young brave looked pleased at the flattering words of the great chief of his tribe.

The Yellow Wolf had no powerful relatives to aid him in his struggle for rank in his nation; alone, unaided save by his own skill and bravery, had he fought his way. The Hole-in-the-sky, the great chief of his tribe, was getting old, was childless; when he retired from the chieftainship his word would have great weight in deciding who should succeed him, and

to that honor, secretly in his heart, the Yellow Wolf aspired.

"How many warriors can the pale-faces bring upon the war-path?" asked the Hole-in-the-sky.

"The chief can not tell," answered the young brave; "the fighting men of the pale-faces are called the 'Destroying Angels'; they are of the tribe of Danites; their chief is a tall brave named Dan."

The Indian referred to that terrible band of men known among the Mormons as Danites—a troop of cut-throats who knew no law but that promulgated by the Mormon chiefs; they were the rod of iron used by the leading spirits of that strange Lorde, who sought to found a city of Zion in the great prairie wilderness—to bend unto their rule the "Chosen People," as they styled themselves, and to silence any uneasy spirit who dared to murmur at their decrees.

Their leader was a man who, whatever his real title had been, was known simply as "Dan." Assuming the name of the Israelite of old and pretending to have a mission from the Mormon prophet Smith, to act as an instrument of vengeance, a "Destroying Angel" to all obnoxious to the Mormons or scoffers at the Mormon faith, he was well fitted to head the ruffian band and execute the "Vengeance of the Lord" on all marked with the ban of the leaders of the new faith.

"Wah! the council shall decide whether the Dacotahs will have peace or war with the white braves." Then, as the chief turned to bend his steps to the council-lodge, his eyes fell upon the figure of the white man, who, still seated on his horse, had remained motionless some hundred paces from the Indians. The chief had noticed his approach with the Yellow Wolf, but the interesting intelligence brought by the young brave had for the moment banished him from his mind.

"Has the white chief come from the pale-faces to talk with the braves of the Dacotahs?" asked the Hole-in-the-sky.

"The white chief does come to talk with the red chiefs, but he is not of the tribe that have built their lodges by the big Salt Lake," answered the Yellow Wolf; "the Dacotah chief met him a long ride from the white lodges."

"And he seeks the chiefs of the Dakotahs?"

"Yes."

"Good, he shall see them. Tell him that the red braves wait for him in the council-lodge." And the warrior turned upon his heel and walked toward the village. The Yellow Wolf went toward the white man, who, single and alone, had sought the lodges of the red braves.

And as the Indian is traversing the hundred feet or so of open prairie that separated him from the white man, we will take the opportunity to describe him.

He was a young man, not yet thirty, but bearing upon his face the marks of toil and care. The face, too, was singular; the cheek-bones were as high as those of an Indian; the piercing black eyes, the long ebony hair floating down upon his shoulders, the strange pallor of the skin, white, despite the prairie sun and wind, all made the face remarkable, once seen never to be forgotten. The firm, resolute chin, the massive forehead and the unyielding lines about the mouth told of a firm will and of dauntless courage; but of the latter no better proof could be given than his presence in the great village of the Dakotahs—the deadly foes of the white man—alone, without even a single friend to aid him. Truly his courage was great or he valued his life but little. What motive, too, could it be that brought him into the fastness of the Indian country and caused him to seek the council-lodge of the red warriors?

In dress, the stranger was plainly attired in a rough woollen suit, big boots, a red flannel shirt and a slouch hat. His arms consisted of a long, wicked-looking rifle—one of the small-bore kind, carrying a ball of a hundred to the pound; a long, broad-bladed knife, something of the style made famous by the ill-fated Colonel Bowie, and a revolver of the old pepper-box pattern, while a Mexican lasso was coiled upon the horn of his saddle.

The stranger sat his animal with the ease of a practical rider.

As the Indian came within a few feet of the horseman he straightened himself in the saddle to listen to the communication of the chief.

"Hole-in-the-sky big chief of the Dakotahs," said the brave.

pointing to the chief who was stalking toward the council-lodge. The Yellow Wolf spoke in English and quite plain, save the Indian accent.

The stranger simply nodded his head.

"The chief goes to the council-lodge; the braves of the Dacotahs will see the white chief; they will have a talk with him. Is it good?" asked the brave.

Again the stranger nodded his head.

"You come talk with Dacotah chiefs. Tell what for pale chief come to land of Dacotah." It was evident that the Indian was puzzled as to the motive that brought the white chief to the home of his red foes.

"Chief," said the stranger, in a harsh, powerful voice, "call one of your braves here, to take charge of my horse; the beast is restive."

The Yellow Wolf beckoned to a brave that, attracted by a desire to gaze upon the white chief, was near them. The Indian obeyed the gesture and approached.

The stranger dismounted and placed the bridle of his horse in the hands of the savage; then, from his back, he unslung the long rifle and laid it down at the Indian's feet; the revolver from his belt followed the rifle; then he drew the long, broad-bladed knife, and with a vigorous throw drove it into the prairie soil at his feet up to the hilt.

The Yellow Wolf and the other Indian gazed at the strange movements of the white chief with interest and astonishment. All his weapons lay upon the ground; he was giving himself, unarmed, defenseless, into the hands of the Dacotahs.

"I am ready," said the stranger; "lead on, chief; conduct me to the council."

Then, with a firm, elastic stride, the tall white chief followed the Yellow Wolf, who led the way to the council-lodge.

The great chiefs of the Dacotahs were all assembled in the council-lodge, waiting for the white man who had traveled across the great prairies to hold a talk with them.

They did not have long to wait, for soon the Yellow Wolf lifted the skin that served as a door and entered the lodge, followed by the white. The Yellow Wolf took his place in the circle of chiefs, while the stranger remained at the door.

The red chiefs were arranged in a semicircle, the great chief of the tribe, the Hole-in-the-sky, in the center.

The warriors for a moment looked upon the pale-face with inquiring eyes; they noticed that he was weaponless; they noted, too, the vigor and muscular build of his stalwart frame, and many of those seated in the half-circle mentally asked themselves, if they would be a match for the stranger in a hand-to-hand encounter.

"Yellow Wolf," spoke the great chief, in the Indian tongue, "tell the pale-face that he sees the great chiefs of the Dacotahs; let him speak; the ears of the red-men are open; they will hear."

The Yellow Wolf, who was the only one of the chiefs who could speak English fluently, arose, and in English delivered the speech of the Hole-in-the-sky to the white stranger. He listened attentively, and when the Indian finished, spoke. As the white spoke only English, being ignorant of the Dacotah tongue, of course Yellow Wolf was obliged to translate his speech to the council. This speech was as follows:

"The white chief has heard the words of the great fighting man of the Dacotah nation," said the stranger, speaking in the figurative language of the Indians; the gleam of the chief's eyes showed that he was pleased with the delicate compliment; "he will tell the red chiefs why he, a white-skin, seeks the lodges of the Dacotahs—the eagles who have flown from the great mountains to the broad prairie."

A gleam of pleasure now sparkled in the eyes of all the chiefs in the semicircle; it was evident that the stranger was creating a favorable impression in the minds of the sons of the wilderness.

"From my distant home in the East, where I have heard of the great nation of the Dacotahs, I have come to their home—come friendless, alone; I enter the council lodge of the red chiefs, weaponless, defenseless—even as I came into the world. I am not afraid, because I know I am talking to great chiefs, men of mighty deeds, warriors whose actions are noted from the Snake river to the Colorado. I was born a white-skin; I am sorry for it; I would be born again, this time a red, and so I come to the council lodge of the Dacotahs to ask the red warriors of that nation to take me

into their tribe, and to adopt me as a son of the Dacotahs."

A hum of astonishment pervaded the council-lodge as the Yellow Wolf translated to the braves the strange wish of the white chief.

CHAPTER II.

THE GANTLET OF DEATH.

THE council-lodge was hushed in silence, as the great chief, Hole-in-the-sky, rose to reply to the pale-face.

"The pale chief is unknown to the Dacotah warriors," said the Indian; "not a chief here in the council-lodge, but has bought his right to be present by some brave deed, some victory over the foes of his nation. We think the white chief is a brave man; will he prove to us that he is so?"

Gravely the chiefs nodded their heads in approbation of the words of Hole-in-the-sky.

"Let the warriors of the Dacotah put me to trial," replied the stranger; "if I show a white heart let them kill me on the spot."

"Wah!" said the great chief, in a tone that showed that he was pleased with the frankness of the offer; "my white brother speaks well. When a young brave of the Dacotahs wishes to be a chief, we test his courage with the Gantlet of Death. Will the white chief submit to the trial?"

"Yes," replied the stranger.

"It is good!" said the chief. "Yellow Wolf," and he addressed the young warrior, "assemble all my warriors, and people by the bank of the river, and prepare the torture-stake." The warrior at once departed on his mission. The chief then turned to his brother, the Black-pan, who was seated in the half-circle. "The Black-pan will take the pale-faced chief to my lodge, and there let him prepare for the trial."

The Black-pan rose to his feet, and with a single gesture, beckoning the white to follow him, left the council-lodge.

The Indian conducted the stranger to the lodge of the Hole-in-the-sky, and there left him.

Alone in the lodge, the stranger commenced to prepare for the trial. He stripped off the heavy woolen coat, girded the belt tighter around his waist, and cast the broad-brimmed hat upon the floor.

A look of determination shone in the flashing black eyes of the white-skinned stranger; the firm lips were compressed more forcibly together. The Gantlet of Death must indeed be terrible, if it could shake the iron nerves of the white man.

A half-hour elapsed before the Indians summoned the victim to the trial. The Yellow Wolf bore the message.

After delivering the summons, the brave looked at the feet of the pale-face, which were incased in heavy boots.

"Ugh! White brother no run; take moccasin."

And the warrior kindly removed his own moccasins and gave them to the white man.

"Thanks, chief," said the white. "I shall not forget your kindness, and perhaps some day I may be able to repay it."

The little act, coming from a savage, touched the white; he accepted it as an omen of success.

The Yellow Wolf conducted the white from the lodge. On the outside of the wigwam stood six warriors, waiting to act as escort to the place of trial. To these six, the Yellow Wolf resigned his charge. All proceeded toward the bank of the river, while the Yellow Wolf brought up the rear.

The inhabitants of the village—men, women and children—were gathered by the stream, close to where the torture-stake was erected.

Through the crowd proceeded the white man and his six guards of honor; behind them followed the Yellow Wolf.

Near the stake stood Hole-in-the-sky, surrounded by the principal warriors of the tribe.

As the little procession passed through the scattered crowd, a young squaw detached herself from one of the groups, and spoke to the Yellow Wolf. The girl was barely eighteen, tall and finely formed, a handsome face though of dusky hue, a step as light as that of the mountain goat, and

as elastic; the flashing black eyes outshone in brightness those of the Rocky Mountain elk. In feature, she was strikingly like the young warrior known as the Yellow Wolf—a fact not to be wondered at, for she was his sister.

“Brother,” said the forest-maid, “who and what is the white stranger?”

“A white chief that wishes to become a Dacotah,” was replied.

“And why do they take him to the torture-stake?”

“To see if he is brave enough to be a chief of our nation.”

“He is handsome as the mountain ash,” murmured the girl, as she gazed upon the lithe yet stalwart form of the white, who was about to be proven by the torture-test.

What thoughts were in the mind of this young Indian girl? Many a young brave had laid his spoils of war and of the chase at her feet, and sued for her to come and share his wigwam; but to all she had said, “Not yet, not yet;” her heart was free; no son of the forest had yet caught her fancy; but now, as she looked upon the tall white chief, she paled and flushed like an April sky, under emotions that never before had thrilled her. How great he became, at once, in her eyes.

With admiring glance the “Red Fawn”—for so she was called—followed in the footsteps of the white man.

The stranger and his escort arrived before the torture-stake and there halted.

The great chief, Hole-in-the-sky, stepped forward and addressed the candidate:

“Will my brother be tied to the torture-stake, so that the warriors of the Dacotah may try their skill upon him?”

“I am ready,” was the response.

Then, at a sign from the chief, two warriors stepped forward; they bore the white man to the stake and bound him securely to it, by two thongs of deer-skin, one passing around his ankles, the other around his chest and arms. At another signal from the chief, a tall brave stepped forward; he placed himself some fifteen feet from the helpless white; drawing the long, sharp scalping-knife from his girdle, he poised it for a moment in the air, and then, with a quick, powerful motion, he darted it at the prisoner. The heavy knife hissed through

the air and buried itself in the tree-trunk a few inches above the prisoner's head. Eagerly the Indians gazed upon the face of the white for some sign of fear, but the look was in vain; not a single muscle of the iron-like face moved. A hum of approval went through the crowd, for but few even of their own race—who were brought up from infancy to the sight—could behold the first knife-throw without a slight movement, if not of the muscles of the face, at least of the eyes; but the stranger had not as much as winked.

The chief made another signal, and this time the Yellow Wolf stepped forward in obedience to the sign. He, too, like the first chief, drew a knife from his girdle, and, after a moment's pause, cast it toward the torture-stake. His aim was better even than that of the first warrior, for his knife silvered in the stake within half an inch of the pale-face's head—so near that the sharp blade severed a lock of hair from the head, and the shining black curl floated lazily to the ground.

Again had the stranger stood the test. Had it been a marble statue, the face could not have been more rigid or shown less sign of fear.

Another hum of approbation resounded through the crowd.

And now, the final trial came, and the great chief himself, Hole-in-the-sky, took his place before the stake.

The chief drew his knife, and apparently without thought or aim, launched it at the prisoner's breast. As we have said, the thong around his body confined his arms to his side; the knife of the chief, thrown with all the strength of his powerful arm, had cut the lashing that passed around the breast, and struck the stake between the arm and the side, and there remained as though the pressure of the arm against the body held it in its place. Had the knife gone half an inch either side, it would have cost the stranger the loss of his arm or his life.

Again the white had borne the test without a muscle quivering.

The loud hum told that the Dacotahs were satisfied with the conduct of the white brave.

At a sign from the chief the two warriors unbound him.

"Tell the brave if he can run the gauntlet and gain the council-lodge, the trial is ended," said the Hole in the sky.

This the Yellow Wolf repeated to the white, who then understood the service the young warrior had done him by proffering the light moccasins. He signified that he was ready.

The warriors, the women and children arranged themselves in two long parallel lines, the lines extending from the river half-way to the council-lodge. Through these lines the pale-face was to run. The etiquette of the ceremony required that none of the pursuers should leave their places in the lines till the runner had passed them. This, though it gave the runner a few feet start, yet placed a fresh opponent on his track every second. Should the pursuers succeed in capturing the pursued, they were the victors; but if the runner gained the council-lodge, then he was adjudged a brave.

Though the pursuers were prohibited from using weapons, when the runner was one of their own tribe, yet the free use of legs and arms was permitted, so that the contest was often productive of hard blows, terrible kicks, and heavy falls.

The lines were formed, the leading chief gave the signal, and, with the fleetness of the deer, the white bounded through the lines. With wild yells the Indians joined in the pursuit. On went the white man at a terrific speed, that left the fleet-footed savages far behind. For a hundred yards he ran at this tremendous pace; not a single Indian, as yet, had succeeded in even touching him; it seemed as if he would gain the council-lodge without even a scratch. He had reached the end of the lines, and now a hundred yards more and the goal was gained; but at the extreme end of the two lines was the fleetest runner in the Dakota tribe, a tall brave who rejoiced in the name of Howling Wind. By his side stood the Red Fawn, the young Indian girl, the sister of the Yellow Wolf.

The runner had cunningly placed himself last in the lines so that, fresh, he could easily run down the fugitive, tired with the spin of the hundred yards.

On went the white over the little plain, close behind him came the Howling Wind; but the Red Fawn—where was she?

The terrific pace that the white had been running began to tell upon him; his breath came short and quick; despite his

efforts, his motion grew less swift, though still very fast. The brave was beginning to gain upon him. Where was the Red Fawn? : : :

With bounds resembling those of the animal whose name she bore, the Indian maid passed the Howling Wind, and came almost within reaching distance of the fugitive. The brave, annoyed at thus being left in the rear, essayed a terrific "spurt," and came nearly abreast of the girl. A hundred feet more the council-lodge were reached; but even now the hands of the Red Fawn and Howling Wind were outstretched to grasp the runner! A yell of triumph went up from the Indians in the rear, when, suddenly, just as the hand of the Howling Wind was about to clutch the shoulder of the white chief, the Red Fawn stumbled and fell. Endeavoring to save herself, she fell against Howling Wind, and brought him to his knee. Profiting by the unlooked-for accident, with a few bounds the fugitive gained the council-lodge, and the race was done. The white chief had won!

The Howling Wind arose, looking daggers at the girl. She, with a peculiar, quiet smile upon her handsome features, withdrew among the women and children. Strange accident it was, that the Indian maid, whose foot was as sure as that of the antelope, should stumble and fall in the open prairie!

The chiefs and braves followed into the lodge, where stood the white chief. : : :

"Wah!" said the great chief; "my white brother has done well. The braves of the Dacotah are satisfied. Can my brother use the warrior's weapons as well as he can his legs?" : : : : : : :

"Let my horse and weapons be brought, and the chiefs shall see," replied the white.

Then all repaired to the open air. The horse and weapons were brought. "

With his long rifle the white put a ball through the top of a slender pole, swaying in the wind, at a hundred paces. The savages gazed at this feat with astonishment.

Then, an unbroken horse being brought, the white mounted his steed, gave chase to the wild animal and skillfully captured it with a cast of the lasso. A murmur of admiration went through the savage throng at this performance, which was

much stranger to them than it would have been to a Comanche or Apache, whose forays were on the Mexican border.

"The pale-face is a great chief," exclaimed the Hole-in-the-sky, to the warriors that surrounded him, as the stranger, at a distance, was dismounting from his horse.

"Is the chief satisfied?" asked the white, as he approached the little circle of warriors.

"Yes," responded the chief, "the pale-face will be a great brave in the land of Dacotah." Then the chief turned to the warriors that surrounded him. "Are my braves willing to receive the white chief as a brother?"

For a moment there was a dead silence, then the Yellow Wolf stepped forward, and, as if answering for all, spoke:

"The pale-face is a great brave; he is worthy to be a Dacotah; the chiefs will be glad to welcome him as a brother. If the white chief would make his home with us, let him then take a wife or a mother from the women of our tribe, so that his wigwam shall not be empty. Is it good?"

A hum of approval greeted the words of the Yellow Wolf.

"The brave is as wise as the beaver," replied the great chief; "his words are good." Then the chief turned in the direction of the women and children, who, some few paces distant, gazed upon the scene. "Will any of the women of the Dacotah be a mother or a wife to the white chief?"

A moment of silence, and then forth from the throng stepped the Red Fawn! A pleased look appeared on the face of the Yellow Wolf as his sister stepped forward. The quick-witted brother already had guessed the love of his sister for the stranger, for the stumble of the sure-footed Red Fawn in the contest he knew was a device to impede the Howling Wind, and allow the white chief to win.

"The Red Fawn would dwell in the wigwam of a great chief; *she* will be the wife of the pale face," said the girl, modestly, stealing a shy glance at the face of the stranger, to note if he was pleased with her preference.

A faint smile was upon the face of the stranger, as he gazed on the handsome, dusky features of the child of the prairie.

"The white chief accepts the maid for wife, and henceforth

his heart is Dacotah though his skin may be white!" cried the pale stranger.

And so, the unknown white man was received into the Dacotah tribe.

That night, when the moon shone clear over the prairie, decked out in the gayly-fringed hunting-shirt and leggins of a Dacotah chief, and with the long eagle-plumes braided in his black hair—the work of the Red Fawn—the white chief stood by the bank of the river. The Yellow Wolf was by his side.

"Will my brother tell the Yellow Wolf why he leaves his own nation and becomes a brave of the Dacotah?"

"For vengeance!" replied the white, his brows darkening. "Chief, I have a foe—a foe who has many braves to aid him. Alone, I am powerless; but now—" and the tone of the white was full of fierce joy.

"A hundred warriors will follow at the back of my brother, and the Yellow Wolf will be the first," said the young chief. "Where is my brother's foe?"

"In the Salt Lake valley—one of the 'Destroying Angels'—the tribe of Dan," returned the white, with force emphasis.

"Wah! their scalps shall dry in the lodges of the Dacotahs."

CHAPTER III.

THE CHIEF OF THE DANITES.

SOME six months after the events related, an emigrant-train halted for the night by the banks of a little creek, in a hundred miles from Salt Lake City. This train was composed of some twenty wagons, all containing Mormon converts, destined for the New Zion by the Great Salt Lake.

The emigrants were busy preparing supper. Apart from the rest, and seated by themselves, were some seven men, all fully armed with rifles, knives and revolvers. Seven stout,

muscular men were they, and of the seven, all but one bore the stamp of ruffian visibly imprinted on their faces.

These seven were the guides and protectors of the train, a portion of the famous "Destroying Angels"—the right-hand men of the Mormon leaders—the assassins, who acted as they were bidden.

The one among the seven who bore a face better than the rest, was the leader of the "Angels," the man known as Dan, and from whom the "Destroying Angels" were named "Danites."

Who and what this Dan was, no one had learned, not even the Prophet, whose chosen instrument he was. All that was known of him was, that about a year before the time at which we write, he had enrolled himself among the "Destroying Angels," and speedily became, by reason of his terrible courage and devotion, the head of that famous band.

In person, the Danite was tall; massive in form, yet not clumsy, but light and active as a cat. In face, he was fair to look upon; light-yellow hair clustered in little curls all over his head; a drooping mustache, of the same hue as the hair, shaded his lip; his eyes were of light-blue, approaching a gray, large and full, yet shifting and treacherous in their look; there were evil lines about the eyes and mouth that told of uncontrollable passions. A man was he with great capability for good, and still greater for evil.

"It 'pears to me, cap'n," said Red Dick, one of the burly ruffians by the side of Dan, who, from his bushy red hair and beard, had gained his cognomen, "that the elder, Higgins, is a little tak arter that gal with brown ha'r, the one that rode in the fat wagon to-day. He were a-spyin' round the wagon 'bout all the time."

"Gads he wants her for his sixth rib," said another of the party, with a laugh.

"He'd better look out, or he'll have somebody in his ha'r," said a third one of the "Angels," who, from his constantly wearing a dirty suit of gray, had got the name of "Grizzly Joe."

"Who's that?" asked Red Dick; "do you mean Lef' Brother?"

"No," responded Grizzly Joe; "I mean the young trapper."

Hank Baldwin. Hain't you noticed how he's stuck with our party? He's got his eye onto the little gal, now you bet."

"The elder'll be arter us to wipe out the Gentile, ef he hankers arter any piece of calico that the elder has got his eye on," said Dick, with a laugh.

"I reckon, ef it comes to that, we shan't git his top-knot without a right smart chance of a fight for it; that Hank's a Kentuckian, an' I b'lieve jist as lief fight as cat; he's old chain-lightnin' on the shoot," said one of the "Angels."

"An' that ain't all," cried Grizzly Joe. "There's the two Injuns, the Yellow Wolf an' Eagle Plume, they're big friends to Hank, an' any man that tackles him will have to tackle them, too."

"What are them air Injuns hangin' round the camp for, anyway?" asked a fourth, joining in the conversation.

"They're chiefs of the Dacotah tribe, goin' to the city to see the Prophet, Young," answered Joe.

"Yes; but how is it that they and the trapper are such friends?"

"Wa-al, I hearn say that this Hank saved the life of the Yellow Wolf, up in the mountains, from a b'er, an' that's how it come," replied Joe.

"That Eagle Plume looks as if he'd stand a tussle with Old Nick him-self," said the fourth ruffian.

"That's so!" replied Dick, emphatically. "Tether feller, the Yellow Wolf, ain't to be sneezed at, either. I hearn say he was chief of the Dacotah Injuns now."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Joe.

The chief of the Danites had taken no part in the conversation; with a moody, abstracted look, he sat a little apart from the rest, and paid no heed to them. A strange fact had been noted in regard to the leader of the Destroying Angels, and that was, he was seldom seen to smile; a deep gloom seemed ever upon him. Men noted this, and wondered at it, and there were many in the Mormon settlement that whispered—for it was not wise to speak openly, and thus incur the anger of the terrible leader of the Danites—that it was the memory of some dark crime committed in the East, and which had caused him to fly to the prairie wilderness, that pressed the shade ever upon his frowning brow.

We will leave the Destroying Angels to their gossip, and their leader to his abstraction, and take a glimpse at another group, seated near a wagon at the other end of the encampment.

The group consisted of two men, and two girls just budding into womanhood. One of these men, about thirty years of age, was dressed in a rough, homespun suit. He was an Ohio farmer, who, lured by the specious promises of the Mormon Prophet, became a convert to the Mormon faith, had sold his little farm, and, with all his worldly goods, had dared the perils of the prairie wilderness to find a home, peace and rest in the New Zion, the city of Salt Lake. One of the young girls—the elder one, with light hair and blue eyes—was his wife, a wife of a few months only. The farmer's name was Stephen Miller. The young girl, of blushing, blooming eighteen, was his sister, Margaret by name, and it was to her that the "Angels" had referred in their conversation.

Margaret Miller, though perhaps not a beauty, yet was fair to look upon. Her face was little, round, and rosy with the blush of health. Dark-brown hair, bearing the rich gloss of the chestnut, was drawn back from the pure white forehead, Greek in its lowness and perfect in its outlines; the mild brown eyes—the eyes for faith and love—the little red lips, that formed the sweet, innocent mouth, displaying, when open, the even white teeth—all gave a charm to the face.

The last of the group was a young man, apparently about twenty-five, clad in the buckskin suit of a hunter. In person he was a little above the medium size, and his well-knit figure gave promise of great strength. His face was a frank and open one; the clear black eye and pleasant smile gave token of a good, honest nature—a man whose friendship was worth the having, whose word carried with it his life; and such indeed was Hank Baldwin, the young hunter who followed the Mormon trail for love of pretty Margaret Miller, or, at all events, he appeared to have no other motive. Whether, in truth, he had some other motive besides the one we have spoken of, our story will probably tell.

"Three more days, and we shall be at our journey's end," said Miller.

"Oh, I shall be so glad," cried Kate, his wife. "I expect we shall be very happy there."

"I hope so, wife," said Miller, fondly.

"And you, Margaret," asked Mrs. Miller, "will you not be glad to see the New Zion?"

"Why, Kate," answered Margaret, slowly, "you know I am not a believer in the Mormon faith, and if all they say in regard to it be but true—"

"Ah!" cried Miller, "but it's not true! Did not Elder Higgins tell us that the enemies of the true faith lied about it? and surely we should believe the elder, for he is a good man, and holds a high place in the church."

"To what reports do you refer, Miss Miller?" asked the young hunter, a quiet smile on his face.

"To the practice of polygamy," replied Margaret.

"Why, the elder assures us that it is all a falsehood!" cried Miller, hotly—"that it is not practiced by the chosen people, nor sanctioned by their faith."

"The elder has deceived you," quietly observed the hunter. "Brigham Young himself has many wives; even the elder has five."

"It can not be!" cried Miller.

"It is true, I assure you," replied the young hunter; "I have been in Salt Lake City and have seen with my own eyes."

"But, if it is as you assert," cried Mrs. Miller, "why do those who are deceived—as we shall be—why do they stay? Why do they not return to the East?"

"The prairie is wide, the path very dangerous," returned the hunter, "and the terrible Danites, the Destroying Angels, stand in the way. Once in Salt Lake City, it is difficult to leave it without the consent of the Mormon leaders."

"You must be deceived," cried Miller; "I can not, will not, believe that the elder would speak falsely to me."

"Time will show," said the hunter. "As it is, you have no choice but to go on; ~~now~~ you can not return."

"As you say, time will show," replied Miller, a dim suspicion beginning to creep over him that, perhaps, the young man had spoken the truth, and that the elder had deceived him.

During this short conversation, a man standing behind the

wagon near the group had overheard every word, and evidently the conversation had not pleased him, for his features were red with passion. He was a fat, oily-looking personage, a little below the medium size; his face was round like a full moon, and his little grayish-blue eyes resembled those of a pig; his short yellow hair was trained in soap-locks down the sides of his forehead. This was Elder Higgins, who was the chief in charge of the train.

Silently, behind the wagon, the elder shook his fist at the young Gentile.

"Ah! you son of Satan!" he muttered, "I'll fix you before we get to Salt Lake City, or my name ain't Higgins! The Destroyers must attend to him. He knows too much. What the devil does he want, following our train, anyway? He's after the girl, I know, but is that his *only* motive?" And the elder thought long and earnestly. "There's some mystery about this. I'll see Dan at once." And carefully the elder withdrew from his ambush, and crossing the encampment, approached the Destroying Angels' camp-fire.

"Dan, can I have a talk with you?" asked the elder.

Without a word Dan rose from his seat and followed the elder. When they were out of ear-shot of the rest of the encampment, the elder spoke.

"Dan, do you know the hunter Baldwin?"

"Yes," answered Dan, with his usual curtness.

"The Gentile knows too much; he dares to scoff at the saints—"

"Well?"

"He must be silenced!"

"A difficult job," said the Danite. "Why does he follow our train?" he added, suddenly.

"Well, I suppose he's after that young girl, Margaret Miller, but I think he's after something else too. I think he is a spy, and that he has some mission of vengeance. Now, I've had a revelation," with a sanctimonious rolling up of the eyes, "and it commands me to give to the death the Gentile hunter."

"Has Margaret Miller any thing to do with the revelation, elder?" said Dan, quietly.

The elder coughed and looked a little confused.

"I suppose then that you have noticed that the Gentile is partial to the girl."

"Yes," responded the assassin, "and I've noticed, also, that that fact don't seem to please you, over and above."

"Of course it doesn't," exclaimed the elder: "I don't wish to see the girl led out of the true path into the ways of sin. **The Gentile must die.**"

"Very well, I'll attend to that matter, but it will be a difficult job, for he is not only handy with his weapons but he has two powerful allies in the Indian chiefs, his friends!"

"Ah!" cried the elder, musingly, "that's bad. We mustn't offend the Indians if we can help it. The Yellow Wolf is chief of the Dakotahs, and we do not care to provoke them to hostilities. The chief now is on his way to see the Prophet in regard to a treaty of alliance. Could you not contrive, in some way, to separate the Gentile from the Indians and then strike him?"

"That depends upon circumstances," replied Dan. "If he should happen to separate himself from the rest of the camp, why, we'll fix him; but, it's not likely; besides, he's well armed and unless we bring him down by surprise he'll be apt to **make a desperate resistance.**"

"Suppose I can manage to fix his weapons—wax the nipple of his rifle and remove the caps from his revolver?" asked the elder, with a cunning smile.

"Why, in that case we can settle him easily, and without creating an alarm; but, the main thing is to separate him from the rest."

"I've got an idea!" cried the elder, gleefully. "After we start on the march to-morrow, I'll make some excuse to engage him in conversation, and by that means contrive to be behind the rest. You and your band can lay in ambush and so finish him. I think that scheme will hold water, eh?"

"Yes, and the crossing of the Green river will be a capital place for the ambushade. The banks of the river are heavily wooded, and then, after we finish him, we can throw his body into the stream and that will remove all traces of the deed."

"That will do," cried the elder, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction; "he will disappear as utterly as if he had sunk into the earth."

"And no longer interfere with your designs on the pretty Margaret, eh, elder?"

"It is our duty to bring all the young lambs within the fold," answered the elder, sanctimoniously.

"Particularly when the lambs are young, tender and pretty," said Dan with a sneer. "But, all right, elder; I'll smite him hip and thigh."

And so understanding each other, the two men separated; the Danite returned to his men, and the elder sauntered slowly back to the wagon of Miller. By the wagon he found Miller and his wife. Margaret and the hunter had disappeared—"gone for a walk," so Mrs. Miller informed the elder. He sat down by the camp-fire, and to the young farmer and his wife dilated upon the prospects of the desert settlement, the New Zion of the Saints, Salt Lake City.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE MOON WENT DOWN.

APART from the rest of the camp sat the two Indian chiefs, the Yellow Wolf and the warrior known by the name of Eagle Plume.

With the Yellow Wolf, our readers are already acquainted, but the other chief deserves some notice at our hands.

Eagle Plume was tall, muscular, and evidently possessing uncommon strength. He was clad in the usual Indian fashion, except that he wore no hunting-shirt, his body being naked from the waist upward, and gayly striped with war-paint, as was also his face. One peculiarity about Eagle Plume was, that, contrary to the Indian custom, he always wore the war-paint, and instead of being painted in alternate stripes as was the general custom of the savages, all of his body exposed to view was covered with paint. His hair, cut short across the forehead and worn long behind in the Indian style, instead of floating loosely down upon his shoulders was gathered up in a knot behind, braided in with which was a head-dress of eagle-plumes. All these little peculiarities gave

the chief a singular appearance. Across the lap of this chief lay a long rifle, one of the kind made famous by the American frontier-men, carrying a ball of a hundred to a pound, and certain death to bird, animal or man at a hundred paces.

"Has my brother found what he was in search of in the camp of the chiefs who have many squaws?" asked the Yellow Wolf, in the Dacotah tongue.

"The chief can not say; he thinks he has," replied Eagle Plume. "He will know when he sees the left arm of the white brave—"

"And when will my brother see the arm?"

"To-night." And there was a gleam like glittering steel in the chief's eyes as he spoke.

"Wah! it is good. Will Eagle Plume need the aid of the Yellow Wolf?" asked the chief of the Dacotahs, for the Yellow Wolf now held that position, the Hole-in-the-sky having died, and the Yellow Wolf having been chosen in his place, at his dying request.

"No; the chief thanks his brother, but he will talk to the white-skin alone," was the answer.

"Has my brother noticed the fat Mormon chief and the young hunter?" asked the Yellow Wolf.

"The Mormon chief is a snake in the grass; he would sting the heel of the young white-skin, but the foot of the Dacotah chief shall crush the snake," and the tone of the chief's voice was cold and calm.

"My brother speaks well," said the Yellow Wolf. "Suppose my brother has made a mistake and the brave he seeks to-night is not the one?"

"Then the Dacotah chief, like the wolf, will follow on the trail till he finds the right one, and then—" there was a fearful meaning in the unfinished sentence.

"My brother speaks straight—it is good," replied the Yellow Wolf. "The big Mormon chief has sent for the chief of the Dacotahs; he wishes a talk. In the Mormon village let my brother keep his ears and eyes open; then he will find what he seeks."

Let us now follow the footsteps of the young hunter and Margaret Miller, as they strolled along in the twilight up the bank of the little creek.

"Mr. Baldwin," said Margaret, suddenly, "I have been thinking of your words this evening."

"In relation to the Mormon faith?" asked the young hunter.

"Yes."

"Do you, too, doubt my words?" he asked.

"No, I believe that you spoke the truth; but my brother has great faith in this Elder Higgins, who denies the report that the Mormons have more than one wife, and says it is nothing but a Gentile falsehood," replied the girl.

"Your brother will learn the truth, but it will avail him but little then; he will be in Salt Lake City, in the power of the men whom he will soon grow to despise. Why, Margaret, do you know that I believe Elder Higgins has already marked you out for his victim, his sixth wife?" said the hunter, earnestly.

"He is deceiving himself then, for I can not bear the sight of him, and sooner than be his wife I would die," cried Margaret, impulsively.

"I know that such is his purpose," returned the hunter; "in Salt Lake City you are utterly in his power, and as either he or the Prophet will have a 'revelation,' as they term it, commanding you to be 'sealed' to him, nothing can save you from him."

"Not even if my brother objects?" asked the girl, in astonishment.

"His objection will have little weight; there is but one law in your city, and that is the will of the Prophet. If your brother should be mad enough to attempt resistance to that will, the terrible Danites, the Destroying Angels, will make short work of him."

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried Margaret.

"It is the truth, and that truth it is best you should hear," earnestly replied the hunter.

"What can save me from this terrible fate?" asked Margaret.

"Margaret," answered the hunter, after a moment's pause, "your question prompts me to an avowal which otherwise, perhaps, I should not have made. Margaret, I love you."

A rosy blush tinged the cheek of the maiden at this confession.

"Margaret, be *my* wife. I am only a poor hunter, but I can at least protect you from your persecutors. I am alone here, a Gentile amid the Mormons, but at my back are five hundred Dacotah warriors. Margaret, can you love me?" and his tone was low and pleading.

A moment he waited, and then the answer came, the low "yes." With an exclamation of joy, he caught the blushing girl in his strong arms, and pressed her to his heart, while from her soft red lips he received the long-lingering kiss that proved that she was wholly his.

Hand in hand, in silent rapture, the lovers walked on.

The shades of night were gathering over the prairie, and darkness was vailing the earth.

"Had we not better return to the camp?" asked Margaret, pausing.

"Yes; for the darkness is coming on rapidly," replied the hunter. Then they turned, and retraced their steps.

"Henry," said Margaret, as they walked slowly toward the camp, "you have never told me why you are going to Salt Lake City. You do not wish to join the Mormons, why then do you seek their city?"

"I have two motives, Margaret. The first motive made me join the Mormon train, the second I found in the train; and even if I had not the first to send me to Salt Lake City, the second would probably have carried me there," and the hunter glanced meaningly at his fair companion, who blushed again up to her temples. She knew full well what that **second motive** was.

"And the first motive?" she asked.

"That requires some explanation; and in the first place I must reveal to you that Baldwin is not my name."

"What is the reason for this concealment?" she asked, in astonishment.

"Listen and you shall learn," he replied. "My right name is Hastings. My family lived in a small town in Illinois, located on the Mississippi river. My father died when I was quite a child, and my mother a few years afterward. I had a brother, some years older than myself, and a sister some five years younger. We were brought up by an uncle. When I was about twelve years old, my brother, who was then just

reaching manhood, went to Mexico; from that day to this I have never heard of him, and I know not whether he is alive or dead. When I became of age, I, too, left my uncle's home to seek my fortune. I joined a trapping-party bound for the upper Missouri, and that is how I became a hunter. My sister, who was a beautiful girl of seventeen, remained at my uncle's house.

"I was away from Illinois nearly four years, and of course, located as I was in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, letters from my sister were out of the question. Well, at the end of four years, with a handsome little sum of money, the product of my skill, I returned to Illinois, went at once to my uncle's house, eager to hold my loved sister once again in my arms. Judge of my despair when I learned that, not two months before my return, she had been lured by the false words of a villain, and, trusting to his promises, had left her home and fled with him. My uncle and aunt had been almost heart-broken at the event, for they had loved my sister Ethel as though she had been their own flesh and blood.

"From my uncle I learned all that he could tell in relation to the affair. The villain with whom my sister had fled was named Luther Hardwicke—at least, my sister left behind a letter from him signed with that name. Then I pursued my search through the village. I found the ferryman who had carried my sister and her destroyer across the river. He remembered the circumstance, and said that this Luther had let fall a chance observation in regard to Council Bluffs which led him to believe that that was his destination. This was clue enough for me. I made my way to Council Bluffs. There I made inquiries, and found that a girl answering to the description of my sister had died some three weeks before. I sought the family in whose house the girl had died, only to have all my suspicions confirmed; the poor girl who lay in the cold grave was, indeed, my erring sister. She had been deserted, abandoned, penniless, by the villain who had lured her from her home, and but for the kindness of a gentleman who heard her sad story, and both pitied and aided the poor child, she would have suffered for the common necessities of life. Struck to the heart by the desertion of him who had sworn to love and cherish her, she had literally died of a broken heart. The

gentleman who proved himself indeed a friend to the poor child, saw her buried, and had a little tablet bearing her name placed at the head of her grave ; and then, as if he had only wanted to do the last kind offices to the poor child, proceeded on his way.

"At Council Bluffs of course I inquired eagerly as to the direction taken by Luther Hardwicke, for he had borne that name there too, and I learned that he had gone to join the Mormons. He had threatened that the Gentiles who had driven him from their midst—for the officers of the law were in pursuit of him—should rue it. I also gained another important clue as to the person of this Luther : on his left arm was the letter L in India ink. The descriptions as to his personal appearance were so varied, that it was evident he was using disguises at times, and perhaps always.

"Now you know, Margaret, what it is that brings me to Salt Lake City. I seek the man who bears on his left arm the letter L. I seek Luther Hardwicke, the murderer of my sister Ethel ; and that the murderer—if I should happen to encounter him unawares, as it is probable I may—shall not be able to guess my object and by flight escape my vengeance. I have changed my name as a matter of precaution. Now, Margaret, you know all my history, and my purpose here in the midst of this Mormon horde ; but be sure you do not breathe to mortal a single word of what I have told you, because, not for all the wealth and honors that this world can offer would I forego my vengeance on the guilty head of the destroyer of my poor sister."

"Do not fear," replied Margaret, gazing with a trusting look up into the manly face of her lover ; "your secret will be safe in my keeping. But, have you any clue as to where or what this villain is ?"

"But little," returned the hunter. "Continuously have I inquired for the man with the letter L on his left arm, but as yet I have not succeeded in finding him. I have a dim suspicion that he is one of the band known as the "Destroying Angels" ; it is but a mere suspicion, yet I am on the watch, and sooner or later fate will give him to my hands."

By this time the twain had reached the camp again.

"It is late ; I must to rest," said Margaret, as they stood

by the wagon that served as her home for the present; "good-night, Henry," and with a farewell kiss, she parted from her lover and disappeared under the cover of the wagon.

Thoughtfully the young hunter walked through the Mormon camp till he reached its outskirts, where, beneath a cottonwood tree, were tied three horses; this was the bivouac of the Indians and the young hunter.

Carelessly the hunter cast himself upon the ground, his thoughts busy with the charming girl whose kiss even now was fresh upon his lips. How he thanked the lucky chance that had brought him to the rescue of the Dacotah chief, the Yellow Wolf, when the fierce mountain king, the grizzly bear, held the red warrior helpless upon the earth. But for that incident he would not now have been able to defy the power of the Mormons and make the pretty Margaret his wife; but now, backed as he would be, should the occasion call for it, by all the fierce Dacotah warriors, he felt that not even the Danites, the terrible Destroying Angels, would dare to snatch his bride from him. And then his thoughts turned on vengeance; and he asked himself if he ever would discover the wretch who had caused the death of his sister, and something within his soul whispered him that he would!

The two Indians were absent from the bivouac; the hunter had not seen them in his passage through the camp. They were probably on the prairie somewhere beyond the limits of the encampment.

So the young man stretched himself out in the shade of the cottonwoods, and fell asleep, his rifle by his side, and his belt holding his knife and revolvers unloosed, but placed within easy reach.

Twenty paces from where the hunter lay was another group of cottonwoods, and their shade also concealed the figure of a man. He was stretched at full length upon the ground, but was not sleeping. He was watching—watching earnestly the movements of the hunter.

Patiently the watcher beneath the cottonwoods waited. When the hunter remained motionless, and appeared to be sleeping, the watcher still stirred not, but patiently, for a half-hour longer, continued immovable. Then, with a snake-like motion, he raised his head and looked around. All was

still within the camp ; all had retired to rest save the picket-guards posted on the outskirts of the encampment. Then forth from the shadow of the cottonwoods crept the spy, who proved to be Elder Higgins !

With catlike steps the elder stole across the open space between the two groves ; then he paused by the side of the sleeping hunter.

Carefully the elder removed the revolvers from the unstrapped belt, then, with the rifle, crossed again to the trees that had sheltered him.

There he removed the caps from the weapons, and pressed wax down into the nipples ; then he replaced the caps, and returning to the sleeper's side, carefully and cautiously restored the weapons to their place. He evidently was an adept in cunning and craft, and smiled over his achievement as he made his way to his own quarters.

As the elder climbed into his wagon, a singular muffled sound, coming apparently from the prairie, fell upon his ear. It sounded as if some one, choking, uttered a half-smothered gasp. For a moment the elder listened, but the sound was not repeated, and, as the elder knew that there was a picket posted beneath some cottonwoods from whence the noise apparently came, he felt no apprehensions.

Little did the elder dream that the dark angel of vengeance had spread his sable wing over the Mormon camp.

CHAPTER V.

THE LETTER L.

THE night passed away and the morning came. Before the sun had risen, all the Mormon camp was astir ; the fires were kindled, the breakfast prepared, for, prairie-fashion, the march commenced early.

By the camp-fire of the pilots stood the chief of the Danites, and the Mormon leader.

"Are the pickets all in ?" asked Higgins of Dan.

"Yes, excepting Ben Smith," answered the Danite; "he was posted in a clump of cottonwoods just beyond your wagon, elder."

"Why is he not in? Can he have fallen asleep?"

"I can hardly believe that," said Dan, thoughtfully. "He's one of the best men in the band. I've sent Grizzly Joe, to see what has become of him."

"Ah, here comes Joe!" cried Dan, suddenly; "now we shall know what has kept Smith."

"Yes, and he's alone," said the elder. "I begin to fear that something has happened to Smith."

Grizzly Joe came rapidly on toward the two men. The quick eye of the Danite leader saw that something indeed had happened, by the expression on Joe's face.

"Well, Joe," said Dan, as the ruffian came within speaking distance. "What keeps Smith?"

"He'll tell you himself," responded Grizzly Joe, in a voice that showed plainly that he was under the influence of some hidden terror.

"Where is he?" asked Dan, his brows contracting, for he saw that something unusual had happened.

"Under the cottonwoods, just where you left him last night," replied Joe. "I thought it better to tell you quietly an' not alarm the camp."

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Dan, following Joe toward the outskirts of the camp; the elder discreetly brought up the rear.

"Well, I don't 'xactly know," responded Joe, dubiously, "but I think Old Nick himself was in the camp last night."

The elder stared at the "Angel" with astonishment, as soberly he stated his belief. Dan looked at the ruffian keenly, evidently under the impression that he was drunk; but, contrary to his usual custom, Grizzly Joe was sober.

The two gained the prairie; a few steps and they stood beneath the shelter of the cottonwoods, and there, right at their feet, with unclosed, staring eyes fixed in death, lay the lifeless form of Ben Smith, the picket-guard.

"Murdered?" cried Dan, springing forward.

"Yes, but by whom?" exclaimed the elder, gazing on the corpse with fear-starting eyes.

"Yes, and *how*?" cried Joe. "Thar ain't any wound that I kin see!"

Carefully Dan examined the body, which was that of a young man some twenty-five or thirty years of age, a good-looking fellow, though his face bore the lines of dissipation and crime.

The body lay on its back, stretched out at full length. Death had evidently been sudden and not very painful, for the features were but little distorted.

After a careful examination Dan spoke: "Smith was surprised sitting down here," and he pointed to the slight impression in the soft earth. "Whoever attacked him approached from behind, cast a cord or a lasso over his head, and dragged him backward, breaking the neck with a single jerk, for that's the cause of his death. Do you not see the traces on the ground where the body has been dragged?"

Closely the elder and Grizzly Joe examined the soil. It was as Dan had said—there were the plainly-defined traces where the body had been dragged along the earth.

"Ah!" cried the elder, suddenly. "I remember, last night, just as I was getting into my wagon, I heard a sound like a man choking—a sort of muffled groan coming from this direction. I listened, but as it was not repeated, I thought it didn't amount to any thing, and so I didn't take any more notice of it."

"That confirms what I said," replied Dan; "the choking sound that you heard was the death-gasp of poor Smith."

"But, I can not understand why he should have been killed, unless he had some secret enemy," added the elder.

"I don't think he had an enemy in the camp," replied the chief of the Danites; "and few men, too, dare to molest one of the Destroying Angels," and a grim smile was upon his face as he spoke. "But the manner of the death puzzles me. I don't think there's a man in our camp expert in throwing the lasso. If there were any Mexicans now among us—"

"The two Indians!" cried Joe, suddenly.

"They are Dacotahs," replied his chief; "their lasso is nothing but a lariat. If they were Comanches or Apaches now, why, I should suspect them as having a hand in this work. Besides, they could have no object in killing Smith. Who-

ever did this deed throws the lasso in the Mexican fashion, and from a considerable distance, because it isn't reasonable to suppose that Smith would let anybody get very near to him, even in the darkness."

Just at this moment, Joe, who had knelt down by the side of his murdered comrade, gave vent to a sudden exclamation:

"What's the matter?" demanded Dan.

"Smith's coat and shirt-sleeve have been slit from the wrist to the shoulder—the left arm."

"Well?"

"An' on the fleshy part of the arm are two knife-cuts, makin' the letter L," cried Joe.

Astonished, the elder and the Danite chief examined the arm; it was as Joe had said. Plainly visible on the arm were the two knife-cuts forming the letter L.

The features of the chief of the Destroying Angels seemed hardened into stone as he gazed on the strange sight.

"Whoever did it, left his totem, as an Injun would say!" cried Grizzly Joe.

"This is the strangest thing of all," said Dan, slowly, as he rose to his feet. Then a sudden light flashing into his eyes, while a visible pallor whitened his face, he exclaimed:

"'Twas Baldwin who did this deed!"

"No, that's not possible," returned the elder. "Last night, for a certain purpose, I kept my eyes on him, and I left him fast asleep when I came to my wagon, and that was the time I heard the noise, which now I am sure was the death-gasp of Smith. So you see it *couldn't* have been him."

It was evident that a deep feeling of uneasiness had taken possession of the Danite's mind.

"What shall we do with the body, cap'n?" asked Joe.

"Take half a dozen of the men and bury it quietly; tell them to keep their mouths shut and not blab the affair all over the camp." The Danite chief ground his teeth together fiercely. "I'll find out this midnight prowler before we reach Salt Lake City and he shall lay my life or I'll have his. But this letter L! It is very strange!"

The elder and Dan walked slowly back to the camp.

"By the way," said the elder, "I fixed the Gentile hunter's weapons last night."

"You did?"

"Yes," and the elder gave vent to a cunning laugh. "I stole to his side while he was asleep and plugged the nipples of his rifle and revolvers, then put the caps back again. When he wants to use them, they will be about as much use as a broomstick. He'll have his knife, though; of course I couldn't fix that."

"We won't give him a chance to use it. Now, what's the programme you've laid out?" asked Dan.

"Simple as falling off a log. It will be about an hour before we cross Green river. I'll get into conversation with him and lag behind. When you reach the river, you let the train pass on, and ambush yourself and a few men in the bushes on the bank of the stream; then, when we cross, why you can pick him off his horse with a revolver shot, and tumble him into the river. The sound of the shot won't be apt to reach the train, for they'll be too far in the advance. Don't you think that will work?" and the elder laughed gleefully.

"Good as grace before dinner," replied Dan.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

BREAKFAST being eaten, the wagon-train again took up its line of march across the prairie.

The train had proceeded some twenty minutes, when Elder Higgins rode up to young Baldwin and requested the favor of a few words with him.

"Willingly," replied Baldwin.

"Just slacken the pace of your horse a little," said the elder; "let the train pass, because what I have to say to you is very important, and I don't wish any one to overhear our conversation."

"Just as you please," replied the hunter, pulling up his horse.

So the two halted until the train passed them.

Now, the young hunter was by no means thrown off his guard. He knew that the elder had guessed his love for Margaret Miller, and that he would not be sorry to have him out of the way. He knew, too, the character of the man by his side, and that he would not hesitate at any means to achieve his ends.

Therefore, when the train passed, he watched quietly to see if any of the Destroying Angels remained behind, too, as he had an idea that they would do. But they went on with the train. When he noted this, it was with little fear that he remained behind, confident that it was with the elder alone he would have to deal.

After the train had passed, the elder spoke :

"Mr. Baldwin, as what I have to say may take up some little time, suppose we dismount, and talk under the shade of those cottonwoods?" and he pointed to a little clump of trees some hundred feet from them, to the left.

"Certainly," replied the hunter, but, ever on the alert, he swept his watchful eye around the horizon, to note if there was danger visible, but the rolling prairie showed no sign of life, save in the fast-disappearing wagon-train.

The two men dismounted, tied their horses to the trees and sat down beneath the shade, the hunter carefully placing his rifle by his side. The Gentile, as the Mormon would have termed him, little guessed that his weapons were harmless—that treachery had done its work, and that he was alone on the prairie, defenseless.

"You are not a believer in the Mormon faith, I think, Mr. Baldwin?" began the elder.

"No," replied the hunter, shortly.

"Ah, I thought so. Mr. Baldwin, as you are well aware, the wagon-train that you are traveling with is composed of Mormons—the believers of the true faith—the seekers after purity and virtue in the New Zion," with a sanctimonious smile.

"Yes, I am aware of that fact, too," replied the hunter.

"As I have said," continued the elder, "you are a Gentile, an unbeliever and a scoffer at the true faith—"

"No," interrupted the hunter, "you are wrong there. Never in my life have I scoffed at any one's belief, no matter whether

I have thought the faith worthy or not. Each man is his own judge on *that* subject, and I do not profess to tell my neighbor what or how he shall think."

"Ah!" and the elder drew a long breath; "but you stated certain things concerning our religion, that I had denied."

The hunter looked at the elder with a sort of half-smile upon his face.

"Oh, I see now, elder, what you are driving at," he said. "You have found out, by some means, that I told Miller that the Mormons practiced polygamy. You have sharp ears, elder, and long ones."

"Take care, young man," cried the elder, sharply, "how you revile the Mormon faith."

"I haven't reviled it. I merely said what you know to be true, though, for some reason, you see fit to deny it," said the hunter, coolly. "As long as I travel with your train, I shall hold my tongue in regard to my thoughts about your religion; though now, between ourselves, elder, I have no hesitation in telling you that I don't think a great deal of the Mormon religion nor of its professors."

"Take care, young man," again cried the elder, "Those that revile the chosen of the Lord shall suffer!"

"Well, as regards that, I have serious doubts whether fellows of your kidney are the 'chosen of the Lord;' and, as to the suffering, I do not fear your threats; if your Destroying Angels molest me, they shall find I can protect myself," and the young hunter slapped the butt of his rifle meaningly.

"I spoke not of earthly vengeance," the elder said, with his usual canting snuffle. "I am not a man of violence."

"Yes, but like many another coward, you use a tool to do the work your heart prompts, but your hand shrinks from," replied the hunter, with calm deliberation.

"Then you will still persist in journeying with our party?" said the elder, rising.

"In your party, no; with your party, yes. The prairie is free; I can camp where I like, and who dares say nay?"

"We shall see!" cried the elder, untying and mounting his animal. "I understand why you linger about the camp. You would devour one of the young lambs of our flock; but beware that you are not stricken with the vengeance of the Lord

in the attempt!" and with this parting shot, the elder put spurs to his horse and galloped off.

For a moment the hunter looked after the Mormon with a disdainful smile.

"The vulture!" muttered Baldwin. "No, I am wrong—not a vulture, a crow; that suits him better. He threatens, does he? Well, the Angels may 'fix' me, but it shall take sword to play that game of life or death."

Slowly the hunter mounted his horse, and followed in the trail of the wagon-train.

Higgins, the elder, had disappeared across the swells of the prairie.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET OF THE WATERS.

THE river—quite a stream here, where the Salt Lake trail crossed it—came rolling calmly down between banks fringed with cottonwoods—those everlasting adjuncts to southern and western rivers—and alders. Just by the ford, the bushes and trees grew densely, so that the ax of the emigrant had been called into play to clear a passage for the teams.

Just below the ford, the stream spread out into a broad, deep pool.

After leaving the young hunter, the Mormon elder pushed his horse into a snapp gallop, and by the time he reached the ford, he had left the hunter so far behind that he was not visible, being hidden from view by the swells of the undulating prairie.

The elder crossed the stream—the water of which reached to the breast of his horse—and halted upon the opposite bank. With a quick and searching glance to the rear, he satisfied himself that the hunter was not in sight; then he cast his eyes around him; all was still; no signs of life appeared in the tangled underbrush that fringed the course of the stream.

"Can Dan have misunderstood my intentions?" muttered the elder to himself, a scowl wrinkling his brows; but, as if

in answer to his thought, the tall form of Dan rose from his covert in the bushes.

"Ah!" cried the elder, in glee, the frown upon his face giving place to a smile of satisfaction. "You are here all right. I was afraid that you had misunderstood me, and that the cursed Gentile would escape."

"No fear of that," replied Dan; "he is following you?"

"Yes, close behind me. Remember, I've fixed his weapons so that they are harmless. I'll ride on at once, for he's likely to come at any moment, and if he saw me halting here he might suspect something. Fix him as quietly as possible," said the elder.

"Don't be alarmed," replied Dan. "If the sound of our shots reached the train, they would imagine we were after game; they wouldn't have any suspicions."

"Where are the two Indians?" asked the elder.

"Way on, ahead of the train," said the Danite.

"That's good!" cried the elder. "If they had any idea of our purpose, they might give us considerable trouble."

"No danger; we'll settle this impious meddler before he's an hour older," said Dan, with a grim smile.

"All right. I'll ride on; be sure and don't fail," cried the elder, putting spurs to his horse.

The Danite sunk back to his hiding-place, and the Mormon, borne swiftly on by his quick-limbed beast, disappeared in the distance.

Concealed in the tangled underwood by the bank of the river, was Dan and four of his best men, namely, Red Dick, Grizzly Joe, and two others, whom we have not before mentioned in our story, known as Tom Ewens and Dave Gindar. From this warlike array, it was plain to be seen that the Danite leader did not hold the prowess of the Kentucky hunter lightly.

The five were ambushed in the the thicket close together; from their hiding-place they commanded a full view of the ford.

"Waal, capt'n," said Dick, as the Danite leader resumed his former position, "what's the bill of fare? Shall we all fire together, or how?"

"No," replied Dan, "I will fire first. If I miss him—which

is not likely—you will fire next; if you miss him, then Joe and the rest, all together. But I don't think it will require more than one shot. Use your revolvers, boys; they won't make quite so much noise as the rifles," said Dan.

Then, to the listening ears of the Angels came the sound of horse's hoofs rapidly approaching the ford.

"That's our bird!" cried the Danite, coolly drawing his revolver from his belt and cocking it. The rest of the band followed his example. And so, couching in their ambush, like the tiger preparing for his spring, the Destroying Angels, revolver in hand, waited for their prey.

We will now return to the young hunter. After the departure of the elder, he leisurely followed on his trail. As he rode along, he thought of the interview that had just taken place. The more he thought, the more puzzled he became.

"Could it be possible," he said to himself, as he proceeded slowly on his way, "that this Mormon elder thought that any words or threats of his would turn me from my purpose, and make me leave the train and give up pretty Margaret to him?" He shook his head in doubt. "No, no!" he cried; "I do not think that Higgins is such a fool as that. What, then, can be the object of this? Is it to separate me from the train, and then have the Angels ambush me at some convenient spot and wipe me out? Is *that* their game? Well, let them come on; I'm ready for them," and he loosened one of his revolvers from his belt as he spoke.

The hunter now urged his horse onward at an increased pace. Soon the yellow gleam of the Green river appeared before him, the surface of the water reflecting the sunbeams that danced upon it, and shining like so many diamonds, through the openings in the shrubbery that grew along the banks.

At the moment he reached the bank of the river, a sudden thought flashed across his mind. "By Jove!" he cried to himself, "this is the very place for an ambush, if they mean me harm!" and, as his horse entered the water, he quietly cocked his rifle. His keen eye swept along the bushes that fringed the opposite bank, but no sign of life met his gaze.

The hunter reached the middle of the river; the water

touched the breast of his horse, and washed the feet of the rider.

Crack ! and the little, sharp sound of the explosion of a cap broke upon the air. No report, however, followed it ; the revolver of the Danite—for it was he who had fired at the hunter—had missed fire. With an oath, he dashed it to the ground.

Quick as the flash of the lightning Baldwin brought his rifle to his shoulder, leveled it at random at the thicket before him, and pulled the trigger. The explosion of the cap alone followed ; *his* weapon, too, had missed fire.

Crack ! crack ! two quick reports rung out on the air. One bullet grazed the shoulder of the hunter, tearing the hunting-shirt ; the other came within an inch of his head ; as yet he was unhurt. Drawing a revolver from his belt, he leveled it at the thicket before him ; five times he pulled the trigger ; five times the caps exploded, yet the chambers hung fire ! Dismayed at this, the hunter mentally asked himself if some malicious demon had not laid a spell upon his hitherto trusty weapons.

Then, from the bushes before him, rung the loud laugh of the Destroying Angels, as they beheld his fruitless efforts, and from their covert in the tangled underbrush the assassins rose to their feet. They leveled their revolvers at the horseman ; death stared him in the face from each shining tube.

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” grimly laughed the Danite leader, “ your weapons are useless, your life is ours.”

The only reply the hunter made was to hurl the revolver in hand full at the head of the Danite. The missile went whiz through the air, within a foot of the head of Dan, and struck Red Dick, who was standing a little behind him, right between the eyes, and laid him out flat on his back. A roar of rage escaped from the lips of the ruffian, as he fell.

Quickly the hunter leaped from his horse, and sought safety in the river. The Mormons emptied their revolvers at him as he disappeared. That he had been hit was plain, for here and there on the yellow surface of the water the stains of blood could be seen.

Eagerly the villains watched the water ; each moment they expected to see their victim, writhing in the throes of death,

rise to the surface. Long they watched and long they waited. Calmly flowed the river, its quiet waters undisturbed by the convulsive agonies of a dying man.

The murderous wretches were puzzled.

"What has become of him?" growled Dick, whose natural beauty had not been at all improved by the couple of black eyes that the blow from the revolver, hurled by the hunter, had given him. Eagerly he had watched, revolver in hand, for the man to rise to the surface, intent on paying back the blow he had received with interest; but, Red Dick was doomed to disappointment, for the body of the hunter appeared not to his anxious gaze.

"I am sure I hit him!" said Dan, with compressed brows, evidently in doubt as to the fate of the man.

The horse of the young Kentuckian had returned to the other bank, and was quietly grazing on the prairie-grass.

"Hit him!" cried Joe. "Sartin you did, cap! See the blood-stains on the water."

"But, what can have become of him?" said Dick, savagely.

"Possibly he was killed outright and his dead body has sink to the bottom," replied Dan.

"That's so, of course!" cried Joe. "Just like a man when he drowns, he always sinks—he don't float."

"I'd like to see him dead though, so as to be sure of it, cuss him!" growled Dick.

"So would I," said the Danite leader. "If he was a good swimmer, he might have swum down the river when he sprung from his horse—"

"What! under the water?" interrupted Dick.

"Yes."

"Blazes! so he might. I never thought of that," cried Red Dick.

"'Tain't likely, cap," said Joe. "It's plain that he was badly hit, and bleeding like a stuck pig. He wouldn't have strength to swim far."

"Perhaps not; yet the blood may come from a flesh wound. At any rate, we'd make sure. Some of you cross the river, and search along down the bank; we'll go on this side. If he has swum down under water, he'll have to take to the bank somewhere," said Dan.

So, in obedience to his commands, Dick, with two more of the Angels, brought forward their concealed horses, crossed the river, dismounted, and scouted carefully along down the opposite bank. Dan and the rest of the party did the same on the other bank.

The search was fruitless, though the assassins traced the stream down a quarter of a mile.

Reluctantly the men retraced their steps to the ford.

"Well, capt'n, are you satisfied that he's gone under?" asked Dave.

"Yes," said Dan; but his tone was far from being one of conviction.

"What shall we do with his horse?" asked Dave.

"Well," said Dan, thoughtfully, "it will not do to carry him back openly to the train, because these two Indians will recognize him; and when they discover that the trapper is missing, they'll be apt to have a suspicion that we know something about his disappearance, and had a hand in it. We'll camp to-night somewhere near Snake Cañon; so two of you had better take the horse and *cache* him there, and then smuggle him into the camp to-night. To-morrow hitch him to one of the wagons; mixed in with the rest he'll not be noticed."

Following the instructions of their chief, Grizzly Joe and another of the men started off with the horse.

Dan, after a long, parting glance at the yellow water, as though with his eyes he would penetrate through the turbid stream and drag to the light the secret that the dark waters concealed, turned his horse's head to the west and gave the signal for the advance.

Over the swells of the rolling prairie the Destroying Angels followed their leader. Suddenly, a hundred yards or so before them, a large white wolf sprung from the shelter of a little clump of bushes, and sped away over the prairie.

The path the men were following led them right past the clump. As they rapidly approached the bushes they saw, to their astonishment, a man extended on the ground, half concealed by the shrubbery. The man was evidently dead, and had attracted the blood-scenting wolf, which the approach of the band had frightened away. The wagon-train, too, had

passed the spot not an hour before ; evidently, the body had not been there then, or else the men of the train would have given it burial, not have left it to be devoured by the prairie-wolves.

All these thoughts passed rapidly through the mind of the Danite leader, as he galloped toward the body, and now, as he came nearer, a feeling of horror seized upon him, for he fancied he recognized the dead man. His fears were true—an hour before the man had been alive.

"Jim Dent!" cried Dick, in a tone of horror, as they dismounted by the body. A cry of terror from the rest of the band answered him. 'Twas true indeed ; before them lay the bravest of the Destroying Angels, a good-looking, black-haired fellow ; and though his eyes were now closed in death, and his features paled by the dread summons he had received, yet they were as calm and peaceful as though he were sleeping.

"Who can have done this?" cried Dave, as he knelt by the side of his dead comrade.

"I don't see any wound," said Dick, examining the body.

"Look at the neck," said the Danite, in his usual quiet, cold tone.

Carefully the Angels examined the neck of the dead man ; no wound was there, nothing, save a slight red mark, as though, for a moment, a grip of iron had encircled the throat.

"Nary wound," said Dick, after a careful search ; "only a little red mark round the neck."

The little red mark told the tale to the leader. He recognized the traces of the fatal lasso ; he remembered the appearance of the body of the picket-guard, found that morning. It was plain to him that both had perished by the same hand ! What could it mean ? Was it some foe who had sworn to exterminate the Destroyers one by one ? and if so, who and what was he that he was able to traverse the pathless prairie, strike his blows of vengeance quick and deadly as the lightning, and like that leave no clue behind.

A feeling of terror crept over the soul of the bold, reckless Danite ; it might be his turn next : how could he fight this invisible foe ?

A cry of astonishment from Dick, who was kneeling by the body, attracted his attention.

"Well, what is it?"

"The left sleeve has been cut open, and on the arm two slashes with a knife make the letter L," replied the man.

A second time had the secret foe left his sign.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPOT OF BLOOD.

ASTONISHMENT showed itself upon the faces of all the crime-hardened band as they looked upon the body of their slain comrade, for now it was plain to all that he had fallen by the hand of some secret foe.

Terror had taken possession of the leader of the terrible band; though he showed it not in his face, yet the terror was in his soul—a secret terror, one he could not fight against.

A strange circumstance the Danite had noticed in regard to both murders. It might be nothing but a mere coincidence, a chance, and then again it might be by design, and if it was by design, the Danite felt he was a doomed man. What he had noted was this: both the men slain had black hair, both were nearly alike in general appearance, both young men; and if the Danite's locks had been ebony instead of golden, the three men, he and the two slain ones, would have looked enough alike to have been brothers.

Gloomily the Danite looked upon the body at his feet; silently he asked himself how long it would be before he, too, would be lying in the cold embrace of the grim king of terrors.

The unknown danger frightened him. These silent, deadly blows, given apparently without warning, against which there was no guard, inspired him with a dread that he could not overcome, that he could not account for.

"What do you think of it, capt'n?" asked Dick.

"The man has been approached from behind, snared with a lasso and strangled," replied the Danite.

"That's the reason thar ain't no mark, or blood about him," cried Dick.

"Yes, but I can not understand how he could allow any one to approach near enough to lasso him in broad daylight. Look and see if you can discover any other trails besides that left by the wagon-train," said Dan.

Carefully and eagerly the men scouted over the prairie, but their search was useless; no trail was there save the broad one left by the train.

One by one they came back and reported their failure to their leader, who, gloomy, motionless and abstracted, had remained by the side of the murdered man, gazing into his face as though he expected there to find some clue to the terrible deed.

"Boys," he said, at length, "for the first time the Destroying Angels have met a dangerous foe; each time he has appeared it has cost one of our band. If we knew this foe the danger would cease, for we would crush him—but he who strikes from behind and in the dark, I can not tell how to fight. The first thing is to discover who and what he is; then we can tell how to deal with him. It is very plain to me that be our enemy man or demon, he acts single-handed and attacks but one man at a time; so, henceforth, boys, hunt in couples; let no man go anywhere alone, but always with a comrade. In that way, I think we can bother him; and mind, boys, don't breathe a word of this outside of our band. It's very plain it's a fight for life and death between us and this unknown enemy. We must find him out and kill him, or he'll kill us, one by one."

"What shall we do with the body, capt'n?" asked Dave, solemnly.

"We shall have to leave it as it is," replied Dan. "We haven't any tools to dig a grave, and the train is too far off for us to procure any from it. Now, boys, to saddle; and remember, keep in couples if you don't want to share his fate," he added, swinging himself into the saddle.

The rest of the band followed his example, and soon they were off in full gallop over the plain, leaving the body of their

dead comrade to the mercy of the gaunt wolves of the prairie.

Return we now to the wagon-train, winding its slow way like a huge white serpent across the prairie.

The foremost wagon of the train was the one belonging to the young Ohioan, Miller. In the wagon were Mrs. Miller and Margaret, while Miller rode by the side of the horses, in close conversation with the elder, Higgins. The two women were talking together.

"You took quite a walk last night," said Mrs. Miller, mischievously.

"Yes," answered Margaret, casting a side-glance from under her long lashes at the face of her companion.

"I hope you enjoyed it," said Mrs. Miller, with a smile of interrogation.

"Yes, I did," demurely returned Margaret.

"Mr. Baldwin is a very nice young man."

"Yes, I think so," said Margaret, in the same quiet tone.

"Much nicer than the elder."

"Do you know, Kate," said Margaret, impulsively, "I almost hate that man?"

"Yet he loves you?"

"Loves me?" and Margaret's lip curled in scorn.

"Yes, he told my husband so last night, and wished to get him to aid his suit."

"What did my brother say?" asked Margaret.

"He told him that you were free to make your own choice, and that he should not attempt to control your feelings on the subject," replied Mrs. Miller.

"Why, Kate, I would rather die than be his wife," cried Margaret, the color mounting to her cheeks, and a gleam of anger in her eyes.

"Mr. Baldwin is a great deal better than dying," said Mrs. Miller, archly.

"Do you think so?" asked Margaret, with a smile.

"Yes; don't you?"

A silent bend of the head was Margaret's reply.

"The elder warned your brother against this young hunter; he says that he is a bad man and a Gentile."

"Well, I am a Gentile too, but the elder is eager enough to

marry me. I suppose he thinks it is a duty he owes to his church," said Margaret, scornfully.

"Oh, Margaret!" cried Mrs. Miller, with a shake of the head, "I'm afraid that you're in love with this handsome young hunter."

"I am," replied Margaret, frankly; "nay, more, I am engaged to be married to him."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mrs. Miller, in astonishment. "Why, I didn't suspect that you had gone as far as that."

"Yes, he asked me to marry him last night, and I consented."

"Well, I wish you joy," said her sister-in-law, earnestly; "but where has Mr. Baldwin kept himself to-day? I've not seen him since we started this morning."

"Neither have I," returned Margaret. "I suppose he does not wish to excite remark by being too attentive."

Just at this moment, the Indian chief, Eagle Plume, rode up alongside of the wagon; behind him came the other Indian, the Yellow Wolf.

"Will the little white squaw talk with the chief?" asked the Indian, speaking English very plainly.

Though the maiden at first shrunk from the hideously-painted savage, yet his gentle manner, and the mild look of his full black eyes, that seemed strangely familiar to her, half banished her fear.

"Yes," she replied, "if the chief wishes to speak, I will listen with pleasure."

Lightly the chief swung himself out of the saddle, gave the bridle of his horse to the Yellow Wolf, and climbed into the wagon. The two girls made room for him, and he sat down upon the seat by the side of Margaret.

"The white squaw has a brave heart—good," said the chief, softly. "Did the white squaw see the young hunter, who is not a Mormon, this morning?"

"Yes," replied Margaret.

"Ah!" eagerly cried the savage, and by the quick flashing of his eye, it was plainly to be seen that he was deeply interested. "When?"

"At the camp—before the train started—early this morning," said the girl.

A look of disappointment was visible on the face of the red chief.

"Wah!" he exclaimed, slowly, "you have not seen him since?"

"No;" and Margaret wondered at the question. She could not comprehend the interest the savage took in her lover.

For a moment the chief was silent, apparently in deep thought. Then again he spoke.

"Did the hunter say he would hunt to-day?" asked the savage.

"No; he said he should not. He told me he would ride near our wagon all day," and a slight blush appeared upon her face as she caught the meaning smile of Mrs. Miller.

A puzzled look was on the stolid features of the Indian.

"He said he would ride near the wagon, and yet you have not seen him since you started?" questioned the chief.

"No; he rode by us a little way, and then the elder, Mr. Higgins, spoke to him; then he stopped his horse, the wagon passed by, and since that time I have not seen him."

"Wah!" and the eyes of the savage glistened as he uttered the exclamation; "with the elder, ah!" Then the Indian made a sign to the Yellow Wolf, who drew near with the horses.

"Good-by," said the chief, abruptly, as he sprung from the wagon to his horse's back; and then the two chiefs drew off a little to the left, and apparently commenced an earnest conversation.

"What a strange creature!" said Mrs. Miller, in astonishment.

"Yes; and how well he speaks English—as well as a white man," replied Margaret.

"It is really strange," responded Mrs. Miller; "and why is he so anxious to know about your husband—that is to be?"

"That of course I can not guess," said Margaret, with a smile at the term; then she happened to glance down at the seat by her side, that the savage had just left, and at the glance she started as though bitten by a snake.

"Why, Margaret!" exclaimed Mrs. Miller, "what's the matter? What made you start so?"

"Oh, Kate, look there!" and she pointed to the wagon-seat. A single glance, and Mrs. Miller knew the cause of Margaret's sudden movement. On the smooth board that formed the wagon-seat was a drop of blood-red, clotted gore. "How could that get there?" cried Margaret, half in fright.

"Why, simple enough; it came from the Indian's knife. Didn't you see that he had a long knife in a scabbard by his side?—and the drop of blood probably leaked through the end of the scabbard," answered Mrs. Miller.

"Yes; but how could the blood come on his knife?"

"Why, he has probably killed some game this morning, and used the knife to cut it up."

"But it looks like human blood," said Margaret, with a shudder.

"Why, you silly girl, just as if all blood didn't look alike; you can't tell the difference," replied Mrs. Miller.

"Yes; I suppose what you say is true; but somehow, the moment I saw it, it seemed to bring Henry before my eyes, wounded and dying. I know it's very silly of me to think of such things."

"I'll clean it away, dear, and then it won't annoy you." Then bustling Mrs. Miller removed the little drop of blood that had fallen, as she suggested, from the knife-scabbard of the chief. Yet, strange to say, though blood dropped from his knife, the Indian chief, that morning, had killed no game—no deer, antelope, or buffalo had fallen beneath the shot of his rifle. Whence, then, came the blood—animal or human—that that morning had stained his knife?

The two chiefs rode on together in earnest conversation.

"He lagged behind the train with the Mormon chief; you remember when the chief rode up?" said Eagle Plume.

"Yes; it was just after that that one of the Mormon braves left the train to shoot at a wolf; you followed him," replied the Yellow Wolf.

"Yes; the brave has not returned," said the other.

"The white wolf has eaten him!" observed the young chief.

The two chiefs looked at each other meaningly. It was evident they perfectly understood each other.

"Just before we came to Green river, the Danite chief and some four or five of his braves detached themselves from the train, and remained behind. After we crossed Green river, I missed them altogether. The Mormon chief has come, they have not."

"Ugh!" cried the Yellow Wolf, suddenly. "I remember now, I heard the sound of shots. I thought it was the whites after game."

"The white hunter is the game they sought; I am afraid they have been successful."

"Look!" cried Yellow Wolf. Dan and his Destroying Angels were riding across the prairie, toward the train. The Indians turned their keen eyes upon them.

As the Angels approached, the Indians noted the face of Red Dick, and the injury he had received.

"The white hunter has been ambushed," half whispered Eagle Plume.

"Yes, surprised, or he would have left more marks behind him," responded the Yellow Wolf.

"He may have escaped; his horse is good, his hand sure."

The Destroying Angels joined the train. Dick explained that he had been accidentally kicked by his horse, which appeared reasonable to all.

Then an antelope happened to appear far to the left of the train. The Indians noted it, and at once gave chase; pursued and pursuers were soon lost in the distance.

Once they were out of sight of the train, the warriors gave up the pursuit, and struck back again toward the trail of the wagons.

"My brother has made two trials?" the Yellow Wolf asked, as they rode swiftly over the prairie.

"Yes."

"Has my brother succeeded?"

"No!"

"No!" responded the Yellow Wolf in astonishment.

"No, the totem was not there. The man I seek is still alive!"

"Wah!" exclaimed the Yellow Wolf, thoughtfully; "that is bad. What is this man like?"

"That I can not tell, except that he has black hair, and is not quite as tall as I am."

"But he bears the totem?"

"Yes; there is no doubt about that," answered Eagle Plume.

"In time then you will find him."

"Yes. I have aimed too low; my bird is higher in the tree. I shall succeed next time," said the chief, in a cold, determined tone.

Eagle Plume is not a child; he has the cunning and the bravery of the pale-face and Indian combined; he can not fail."

The other bent his head to the compliment.

"Where shall we ride?"

"To the ford of the Green river; it is the only place on the trail fit for an ambuscade. If the Mormon chiefs have trapped the white hunter, it is there that they have laid their snare," replied the elder chief.

"Good. In a few minutes we shall know."

"And if the white hunter has fallen beneath the knives of the Mormons?" asked Eagle Plume.

"Then the Mormon braves shall fall beneath the knives of the Dacotah warriors; one by one shall they fall, like the leaves of the forest, and their scalps shall hang and blacken in the Dacotah lodge, to show the vengeance of the Yellow Wolf."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FOOTPRINTS BY THE RIVER.

SWIFTLY the two warriors rode toward the wagon-trail; the trail once reached, they bent their course to the ford. Once there they dismounted, and carefully scouted over the ground. A few minutes' search and they discovered the spot where the Angels had lain in ambush.

"You see—one, two, three, four, five!" and the Yellow Wolf pointed to the traces of the ruffians.

Then the chiefs crossed the stream; they noted the hoof-prints of the hunter's horse where he had left the river, eaten off the grass, and then again returned to the stream.

The shrewd instinct of the savages told them what had happened.

"He was ambushed as he was crossing the stream," said Eagle Plume.

"Yes, the hoof-prints were made by his horse coming from the stream, but he again entered the water."

"Probably the hunter fell into the stream; naturally the animal would return to the bank."

"But he again crossed the water."

"The Angels came for him; let us look on the other bank."

Then the two Indians recrossed the ford; they followed the trail, and soon noted where the two Angels with the riderless horse had left the others and struck off to the south.

"See!" said the Yellow Wolf.

"Yes, the hunter is—"

"In or by the river—let us look!" cried the younger Dacotah chief.

The two Indians carefully scouted down the stream, one on each side. They soon saw the traces where the Angels had been on a similar errand. Then the truth flashed upon them; the hunter had been attacked, had taken refuge in the river, and the Angels had been searching for him. It was plain, then, that the ruffians had not killed him outright.

An idea entered the minds of the two chiefs at the same moment. If the hunter had sought the water for safety, he would be more likely to go up-stream than down. So, speedily they retraced their steps; they passed the ford, and by the borders of the stream above it they sought for traces of the presence of the white hunter.

Carefully and earnestly they scouted along the river's bank. A hundred feet above the ford, the elder chief came upon the overhanging bank, from which the alders grew down, washing their leaves in the river. A sprig of alder, from which some of the leaves had been stripped, caught the keen eye of the lynx-eyed observer. He bent down and examined it; the twig had evidently been grasped by a human hand; another

glance revealed to the eyes of the Indian a little drop of blood on one of the leaves of the alder-bush : he had struck the trail—in frontier parlance, had “lifted” it. He signed to the Yellow Wolf on the opposite bank—that warrior immediately crossed the river.

Carefully the warriors examined the alder-twigs.

“He has been wounded,” said Eagle Plume, pointing to the little spot of blood.

“Yes, he found shelter under cover of these bushes.”

“He must have taken to the bank here somewhere ; he is not dead.”

Carefully the warriors proceeded up the stream : not a bush dipping its leaves in the running waters, not a blade of grass growing on the bank, escaped their searching gaze. A hundred feet or so beyond, the bank sloped more to the stream, and in the shrubbery that fringed it, the Indians came to a little open space ; in the open space they found ample evidence of the presence of the hunter—the blades of grass here and there had been crushed by his feet and were sprinkled with drops of his blood ; the crumbling bank, too, showed where he had emerged from the water.

The work of the two warriors was easy now—it was but to follow the footsteps, and thus trace the hunter to his refuge.

“He was not wounded bad,” said the Yellow Wolf, pointing to the print of the hunter’s feet ; “you see, he walks straight.”

“Yes,” and then Eagle Plume swept his eye over the country before him, in the direction that the footprints went. His glance fell upon a little clump of timber some hundred yards or so from him—one of those little clumps known to the prairie-men as “islands.” Toward this island of timber the footsteps tended.

“He is there,” said the older chief, indicating the island by a sweep of his hand.

Swiftly the two Indians walked toward the little timber-clump, following the plainly-defined footprints.

They arrived at the refuge, but no motion within gave sign of life.

Eagle Plume parted the bushes with his hands and looked

in ; a little open space met his eyes ; in the center of that space lay, motionless, the senseless form of the young Kentuckian.

Silently and sorrowfully the two Indians knelt by his side.

CHAPTER X.

AN ELDER'S WOOING.

ELDER HIGGINS had noticed the approach of Dan and the Angels, and, eager to learn if they had succeeded in their mission, he reined in his horse until they came up to him.

"Well?" he asked, impatiently.

"It's all right," answered Dan ; "we've fixed him."

"Thank you—thank you!" cried the elder, joyfully.

"We shot him as he was crossing the ford of the river, and he tumbled into the stream."

"Very good, Dan. Now there is one other service that you can do me ; I'll pay you handsomely for it," said the elder.

"Something private, then?"

"I'll tell you to-night, after we halt for supper. I haven't exactly made up my mind yet which is the best way to fix it. I can tell then," replied the elder.

"Well, let that pass now. Elder, two of my men have been killed."

"Two?" cried Higgins, in astonishment.

"Yes, the one last night that you saw, and another one this morning, killed not an hour ago and left on the prairie—both killed the same way, no mark of violence, except a red line around the neck."

The elder became thoughtful.

"Do you think these Indians have had any hand in it?" he asked.

"I don't know what to think," returned the Danite, gloomily ; "two of my best men have been killed outright, apparently without even a struggle for their lives. When I think

the matter over, it seems as if the very devil himself must have had a hand in it. I say, elder, you had better be careful; it may be your turn next."

The elder's rubicund cheeks became white.

"I can't understand it," he said, and his lips trembled as he spoke. "I think I shall put some of the men on guard around my wagon to-night."

"Yes, you had better; but, if it is the Devil, it won't make much difference to him; he'll take you, guard or no guard," said the Danite, grimly.

"Don't be foolish!" exclaimed the elder, testily, but he trembled as he spoke, "our foe is a man."

"Well, if he is, he's got the courage and shrewdness of the Devil," returned Dan; "but, man or demon, I'll hunt him out. It is my life against his."

"Keep good watch to-night; you may discover him," suggested Higgins.

"Yes, my eyes won't close in sleep to-night, you may depend upon it," said the Danite leader, an air of determination in his manner.

"Well, I'll see you to-night about the little job I want fixed."

"I'm your man," returned the Danite.

The elder spurred up his horse, and again resumed his place by the side of Miller.

The Danite, moody and abstracted, rode on a little apart from the train.

For once in his life, all the bravado of his nature was silenced. In his heart he cursed the unlucky chance that had placed this terrible foe upon his track, for he felt a presentiment that these two terrible blows, each one of which had cost a human life, was intended for him; the unknown foe as yet was striking in the dark, but light might come at any time. The singular mark left on the arm—the two knife-cuts making the letter L—puzzled him.

"What can it mean?" he cried, moodily, to himself, as thoughtfully he proceeded on his way. The face of the young hunter would come up before him. Why he could not tell. He had certainly never before met the man, and yet there was something familiar in his face, voice, eye. Who

was he? But what had all that to do with that mysterious sign on the dead men's arms—the letter L? Yes, what? The Danite turned his thoughts back to former years. “No,” at length he muttered, “the name is not familiar to me. *That* man could have had no interest in my past life. Stay!” he cried, as a sudden thought flashed upon him, “the name may be a false one! If so, what act of my past life would place him upon my track?” And the leader of the Destroying Angels thought long and earnestly. “It is useless, I can not guess; besides, what matters? He’s out of the way; all I have to fear is this secret foe; he alone is dangerous.” And so, with his mind busy with plans to outwit the invisible foe, whose blows alone were seen, the Danite rode moodily on.

When the train made the noon halt, the two Indians again joined it; when questioned as to their success in the hunt they said “nothing.”

In the afternoon the train was again in motion. Higgins rode by the side of Miller and once more endeavored to get the young farmer to press his suit with his sister. Miller, although he frankly told the elder—whom he regarded as a bright and shining light of the Mormon church—that nothing would please him better than to have his sister marry him, yet he would not force her inclinations but should leave her free to choose for herself. With this answer the elder had to be content, but he resolved that that very evening he would propose to the pretty Margaret and endeavor to persuade her to become his wife; for a suspicion had taken possession of the sanctimonious scoundrel’s mind, that without the girl’s consent it would not perhaps be as easy to get her “sacked” to him, on their arrival in Salt Lake City, as he had thought. Margaret was very pretty, and there were men higher in power in the Mormon church than he; if she should happen—as was extremely likely—to catch their fancy, the elder felt that his chance was very far from being the best in the world. Like a beautiful ox or ass, she was liable to seizure and appropriation by any one of those above him in authority.

If Margaret should refuse to become his wife—as the elder was pretty certain that she would—then he had a scheme by which she might be won, and in carrying out that scheme, he needed the assistance of the Destroyers.

So when the train halted for the night, the elder, after supper was over, took advantage of a favorable moment to approach Margaret and request the favor of a few minutes' private conversation.

The poor girl was ill at ease; she had not seen her lover since the morning, and his continued absence alarmed her. She felt sure that harm had come to him, and she looked upon the elder as the author, or at least the instigator of that harm. She went with him, then, with the same reluctance that she would have felt had a hyena offered to be her escort.

When they had walked out of hearing of the rest of the camp, the elder spoke.

"My dear Miss Margaret," he said, "I presume it is not unknown to you that I have taken a great interest in your welfare. You are a young lamb exposed to the wicked snares of this world. I, as a shepherd of the Chosen People, feel it my duty to bring you into the fold. My position in the church, of course you know; I am high in favor with the Prophet and rich in worldly goods, but richer still in the knowledge that I am an humble instrument in the great cause," and the canting tone of the Pharisee came out loud and strong. "I have spoken to your brother and he gives me his sanction. Miss Margaret, I would ask you to leave the Gentile faith and become one of the Chosen People. It is not good for man to be alone; therefore I would take you for wife and thus secure your eternal welfare."

To the pure young girl, brought up in the simple Christian faith, reared from child to girlhood under the truthful teaching of the good old minister, the pastor of the little Ohio village—a man kind and simple in heart as a child—preaching the "Word" with love toward all men, Jew or Gentile, Christian in heart, thought and deed—the phrases of the wily Mormon seemed like idle mockery, and each word that he spoke increased her loathing for him.

"Mr. Higgins," she said, slowly, "I am sorry that you have spoken in this way to me; I do not love you, and I must reject your proposal."

The Mormon elder looked any thing but pleased, although he had anticipated that his suit would be unsuccessful.

"Take time, my dear young lady, to consider the matter;

be not hasty ; you can hardly know your own mind as yet," he said, in his smooth, oily accents.

"Time will not change my mind, Mr. Higgins," she replied coldly, annoyed that he would not take no for an answer.

"Ah, you don't know that, my dear young lady," he rejoined; "time does a great deal. And, as you do not love any one else, why, you may learn to love me."

"Suppose I do love some one else?" asked Margaret, provoked at his manner.

"It is not likely," he replied, coolly; "you may think you love some one, it is natural for a young girl to think so; but young ladies of your age seldom know their minds."

Margaret's eyes flashed fire at this cool, insolent remark.

"You may be certain, sir," she said, quickly, "that I know mine, and I am not likely to change."

"Ah, my dear child, we all change in this world. To give you an illustration: take the young hunter that has been traveling with our train, this Kentuckian called Baldwin; report says that he was in love with a certain young lady belonging to our party, and the foolish child probably thought that he really did love her and that she loved him; yet this morning, when he was mildly told that the course he was pursuing was wrong, and that if he continued in it, would probably bring down upon his head the vengeance of the Lord, he wisely gave up his purpose, left our train and started for the East."

The elder watched the face of Margaret keenly as he uttered this false tale, but, save a slight compression of the lips and a quick flash of the eyes, sign of emotion she showed not. The elder was disappointed. He had expected a passionate outbreak; the cool silence disconcerted him.

For a while they walked on in silence, the elder not exactly knowing what to say, for the girl's manner puzzled him.

As for Margaret she did not believe a single word that the Mormon elder had uttered. In her own mind she was fully satisfied that if the threats of the Mormon had compelled her lover to withdraw from the train, he was hovering near, and at the proper time would come and rescue her from the power of these bold, bad men.

Just as the elder had made up his mind to renew the conversation, Margaret turned suddenly around and announced

her intention of returning to the camp. Of course the elder could not very well object, and he was compelled to retrace his steps with her.

"You will think over what I have said, my dear Miss Margaret?" he asked in his blindest voice.

"It is useless," she replied, firmly. "I have already told you that I can not love you and therefore can not be your wife."

The Mormon bit his lips; he was getting angry; but he kept back his passion although it was difficult to do so.

"This is your final answer, then?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"You will not change?"

"No."

For once in his life the fluent-tongued elder was at a loss for words; bitterly in his heart he cursed the fair girl at his side, and he mentally swore that she should be his, if not by fair means then by foul.

The two reached the camp again. The elder conducted Margaret to the wagon of Miller, and with a bow left her and strode away to seek the chief of the Danites. He was too angry for words; he felt that he could not trust himself to speak, for his policy now was not to excite her suspicions until after he had played his next hand in this game of life, and that hand he felt sure would be a winning one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELDER PLAYS A DESPERATE GAME.

THE elder found the Danite just preparing to post his sentinels for the night. Contrary, however, to his usual custom, he placed them in couples instead of singly; he was taking the first move to checkmate the invisible demon that had already destroyed two of his band.

The elder accompanied him on his rounds till all the men were posted.

"There," said the Danite chief, as he left the last couple, "if I lose a man to-night, it's the Devil I'm fighting against, and nothing human. Now, elder, I'm at your service."

"You know, of course, that I feel a very deep interest in this young girl, this Margaret Miller."

"That is, you want to make her your sixth wife," said Dan, bluntly.

"Exactly," replied the elder; "but the foolish child—"

"Prefers the young hunter to you?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," said the elder, with a shake of his head.

"Well, how can I help you?" asked Dan.

"That's just what I'm going to speak about," replied the Mormon. "Of course you are well aware that there are many in Salt Lake City higher in the church than I am. Now, if this young and pretty girl goes into Salt Lake free, some of these men may take a fancy to her. I shall be powerless to resist, and so, though I have got the Gentile hunter out of the way, I shall lose her after all."

"That would be ugly."

"I should say so. Now, Dan, you are the only man who can place this girl in my hands."

"I?" and the Danite looked at the elder in astonishment.

"Yes, you," returned the elder, "if you will do so. And if you will aid me, I'll give you a hundred dollars."

"It's a bargain!" cried the leader of the Angels. "Now your plan?"

"It's very simple. You know my house in the city is remote from all others, being in the outskirts of the town. To-morrow night we make our last halt, for, on the following noon, we reach the city. Now, after we halt for the night to-morrow, let you and two or three of your men, disguised as Indians, burst into the camp, seize the girl, carry her off with you, bandage her eyes, put her in my house in Salt Lake, and the thing is accomplished; she's in my power, and I'd like to see anybody save her," and the little pig-like eyes of the elder sparkled as he unfolded his plan.

"It's a good idea," said the Danite, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think it will work," responded Higgins, rubbing his hands together gleefully.

"The dash will have to be quick."

"Of course. Arrange matters so that no one can interfere with you. You can seize the girl and be off before any one can even attempt resistance. No one will suspect the plot."

"And I'm to have a hundred dollars?"

"Yes," responded Higgins.

"It's a bargain. I'll carry off the girl for you," said the ruffian.

"Let the dash be made about nine o'clock. I'll call Margaret out of the wagon on pretense of wishing to speak with her. Then you can make a rush from the timber, fire a shot or two; I'll pretend to be hit, and tumble over; then you can carry off the prize."

"All right; you can depend upon me," replied the Danite, and so the pair of rascals separated.

The elder sought his wagon to rest for the night, while the Danite leader, rifle in hand, stole slowly and cautiously from picket to picket, intent on surprising the mysterious assassin. All night long the leader of the Destroying Angels kept his ceaseless vigils; his eyes closed not in slumber; the trusty rifle but not his grasp; his watchful ear caught every sound that floated on the still prairie-air; but, when the gray tents of the morning broke through the eastern skies, Dan was no wiser than he had been the day before as to the identity of the foe who had stricken to the death two of his assassin band.

When the pickets came in, Dan noticed that Dave Gilder looked pale and careworn; he, with one other, had been stationed on the picket to the north of the camp.

Dan took the young man aside and inquired if any thing had happened during the night to alarm him. Dave at first seemed reluctant to answer, but after a little urging he spoke.

"Well, capt'n," he said, slowly, "if you must know, I think the devil or one of his angels was around my post last night. You know Bill was on guard with me. Well, he can't hear any more than a post. I guess it was about twelve or one o'clock; it got as dark as thunder, and it was hard work to keep sleep away. Just about that time I heard a slight noise

whose personal appearance resembled his; that is, would have resembled his, but with hair even black instead of yellow.

"Come," he said to Dave, "show me where all this happened."

Dave led the way to the spot he had occupied during the night.

Carefully the Danite chief examined the ground; at last his search was rewarded, for, on a little bare space of sandy loam, he found the full, clean impress of a human foot—a foot unshod by either boot or moccasin; not the foot of an Indian, as the Danite had expected to find, but the foot, evidently, of a white man—a delicate, finely-formed foot, not the broad, splashing one of the savage.

The Danite pointed to it.

"You see," he said, "your spirit leaves foot-prints. Try your revolvers on the next one, and if your aim be true, you'll find a body."

Once again the train was on its last day's march but one, and the hearts of the wayfarers grew glad as the journey grew short, and the city of the saints—the New Zion—the Mecca of the Mormon faith—drew near.

At noon, as usual, the train halted. The two Indians scoured out over the prairie, as if in search of game.

Half an hour or so afterward they returned, bringing with them a strange Indian.

The stranger chief was a tall, muscular-looking brave, oddly attired; his leggings had been made with the wrong side out, and were streaked with paint; his chest was decorated with war paint, as was also his face; a red blanket was wrapped around the upper part of his body; his hair was quite short for an Indian, worn long behind and cropped across the forehead, in accordance with their custom; in it, feathers were thickly braided. There was quite a striking resemblance between the strange Indian and the Dacotah chief, Eagle Plume.

The elder, as captain of the train, approached the strange Indian.

"Big chief—found on prairie—come see Mormon braves," said the Yellow Wolf, introducing the stranger.

"Ah, does my brother speak English?" asked the elder.

A grunt from the stranger answered the question in the negative.

"What nation?" asked the elder.

It was evident that the savage understood the meaning of the question, for he drew himself up proudly and replied:

"Ute!"

The elder started. The tones of the Indian's voice were strangely familiar to his ear. For a moment he gazed at the savage in astonishment, and evidently bewildered; but the savage looked at the elder without moving a muscle.

"It's very strange," muttered the elder, to himself. "I can swear I've heard that voice somewhere before. Can't," he said, addressing the stranger, "do you understand English?"

The savage nodded his head, as much as to say "yes."

"Ah!" The elder hesitated for a moment, and looked the savage straight in the face, with a puzzled expression. "Has my brother ever been in Salt Lake City?"

"Ugh!" the guttural grunt from the savage signified that he had.

"Oh!" and the brow of the elder grew clear again; he remembered that a delegation of Utes had visited Salt Lake City some time before, and it was there that he probably had heard and seen the fellow, for the savage's face, as well as his voice, was familiar to the elder.

"My brother is going to Salt Lake?"

Another grunt from the Indian conveyed the intelligence that he was going.

The elder, satisfied, left the group, for, by this time, quite a little knot of people had gathered around to look at the strange chief. Among the rest came Mrs. Miller, and Margaret. When the tones of the Indian's voice fell upon the ear of the young girl, she, like the elder, started in astonishment. She fixed her eyes searching upon the features of the dusky chief; a few moments she gazed, and then a smile of joy came over her face; for, despite the war-paint smeared upon the face—despite the altered fashion of the hair—her keen eyes discovered the truth: Love discovered the truth that she passed blindly by.

With a beaming smile upon her lips, and new hopes spring-

ing fresh in her heart, as the Indian turned away with the other two, Margaret returned to the white topped wagon, which was her home for the present.

Again the train proceeded on its way; the strange Indian, mounted behind the Yellow Wolf, following leisurely in the rear.

That night the cunningly-contrived plan of the Mormon elder for the abduction of pretty Margaret was to be put in execution.

During the afternoon march, the elder and the Danite leader had arranged all the details of the scheme. How the Mormon longed for the shades of night to come, that they might shut him and his prey out from the gaze of the world!

The train was halted for the night, as usual—the last night of the march, for the morrow would bring them to the City of the Wilderness—the Promised Land for the Chosen People.

The train was “parked” for the night, the pickets, as usual, thrown out, the supper was prepared and eaten, and the emigrants began to prepare to retire for the night. By nine o’clock the entire camp was hushed in slumber.

It had been arranged that Grizzly Joe and Red Dick were to play the part of Indians, and carry off Margaret; the rest of the gang were to fire their weapons, and act as though they thought the camp surrounded by the red-skins. In the confusion, the two emissaries could easily escape, and when they were missed in the morning, all would imagine that they had fallen into the hands of the Indians.

All was favorable for the elder’s plan.

Having seen that the bogus Indians were ready, concealed in a convenient thicket, the elder went to Miller’s wagon. The family had not yet retired, but were seated on the ground by the train. The elder joined the circle; a short conversation followed, then the Mormon gave the signal—a slight cough—for the attack.

Joe and Dick, disguised as Indians, sprung from their concealment in the thicket. With a single blow they stretched Miller out on the ground, then Dick seized Margaret in his arms, and ran swiftly toward the two horses that stood by the little thicket. In a second, both he and Joe were in the saddle

and in full gallop for the open prairie. The elder shouted for help, and discharged his revolver in the air; the pikets, also, as had been arranged, fired their pieces, and came rushing into the camp, as if every red warrior of the Great American Desert was at their heels.

The camp was a Babel; the emigrants, expecting a terrible Indian attack every moment, gave themselves up for lost; the shrieks of the women and children mingled with the prayers and curses of the men.

The three Indians, who sat their horses like statues—for the stranger chief had procured a horse during the excitement—and waited, rifle in hand, for the attack, were about the only cool ones in the camp.

As no attack came at last, the excitement ceased; then, and not till then, did Miller discover that Margaret was missing.

The elder was loud in grief. Miller besought the Dakota chief to send a force to rescue his sister, but the chief of the Angels refused.

"I have but a few men," he said; "the Indians may renew the attack at any time; for the sake of one child I leave all helpless and unprotected?"

The emigrants, fearing for their own safety, protested loudly against endangering the whole train, and so Miller was forced to yield. The elder, however, comforted him, by assuring him that the moment they reached Salt Lake City, he himself would see a large force dispatched to rescue the helpless girl from the hands of the brutal savages. And all this while the elder was laughing in his sleeve at the ~~approval~~ success of his plans.

CHAPTER XII.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

CARRYING the senseless girl in his arms, and closely followed by Joe, Red Dick spurred his fleet, powerful horse over the prairie.

On went the two ruffians for a mile or so, without a halt; then they reined in their steeds. Dick bound a bandage tightly over the eyes of the still senseless girl, and they again rode swiftly on toward Salt Lake City.

The emigrants' halting-place was only some thirty miles from the city, so that four hours hard riding brought the party to the house of the Mormon elder.

Margaret of course came to her senses long before that time but she did not for an instant dream but that she was a prisoner in the hands of the Indians.

Dick rapidly explained to the servant in charge of the house the wishes of his master. He, accustomed to obedience, at once conducted the captors and the captive to the room that the elder had designed as the cage for his lady-bird.

Short bars were upon the windows, which looked forth upon a little thick ket that hid from view the distant country.

The bandage was removed from the captive's eyes and she looked upon her captors. At a single glance she recognized them, and at once realized her position. She was not in the hands of the red savages—no, worse, in the power of the Destroying Angels!

"Now, little girl," said Dick, in his rough way, "jist make yourself comfortable hyer; don't try far to git out, 'less you'd only git badly treated if you do."

"Why has this outrage been committed?" indignantly demanded Margaret.

"An us no questions an' we'll tell you no lies," responded Dick, with a grin.

And with this consoling observation the two ruffians withdrew.

Margaret sunk upon her knees in the agony of despair. Poor girl, her fate was, indeed, a hard one. She was helpless in the power of the Mormon elder—the man who, a coward at heart, crushed the weak and trampled upon the defenseless.

The two Angles had ridden fast across the prairie, but, fast upon their track came the three Indians, Eagle Plume, the Yellow Wolf and the Ute chief.

From the first these sagacious men had suspected that they were not following the trail of red warriors. The mode of attack was so unlike the Indian in character, the manner of their flight so foreign to the ways of the savages, that they at once suspected the plot: and then, the hoof prints of the horses showed that they were shod with iron, something rare for the horse of the prairie Indian. The three were fully satisfied that the abductors of Margaret had white skins and not red.

Strange to say the Ute chief seemed most anxious in the pursuit, as he came first on the trail, while behind him followed the Yellow Wolf and Eagle Plume.

When the pursuers arrived at Salt Lake City, they were only some thirty minutes behind the two abductors, with their prey.

Near the city they lost the trail, as it was impossible to distinguish it from the numerous other hoof prints leading into the town.

The three halted and held a council.

"Brothers, what do you think?" said the Ute chief, using most excellent English, although in the Mormon camp he had denied all knowledge of the tongue.

"The girl is in the hands of the Mormons," said Eagle Plume, slowly.

"That is plain," said the Ute chief. "Probably these two men are acting for Elder Higgins, but as we have lost the trail—"

"We can find it again," cried Eagle Plume. "When the elder comes to the city he will seek the girl. We will watch him and he will lead us to her."

"My brother speaks straight," said the Yellow Wolf in approval.

"Yes," replied the Ute chief; "he himself shall reveal to us the prison of his victim."

And so, ambushing themselves in a clump of timber, the Indians waited for the approach of the wagon-train and the Mormon elder.

In due time the train arrived. As it passed the hiding-place of the Indians the Yellow Wolf spoke.

"Let my brother of the Eagle Plume follow the steps of the Danite chief; we will watch the Mormon brave."

"So be it," ironically replied the elder chief.

So into the city rolled the train, and after it came the three Indians.

Higgins and the leader of the Angels made their report to the Prophet of their journey, and then returned to the street.

"I'm going to see my beauty," said the elder, with a grin.

"Will you come?"

"Yes, in an hour or so," answered the Danite.

"I expect the little beauty will be terribly angry, but I think I can tame her."

"At least you'll try," said Dan, with a cold, chilly laugh.

"Yes."

And so the twain parted—the elder to seek the prison of Margaret Miller, the Danite on his way to the headquarters of his assassin band.

The house of the elder where Margaret was confined—for he had two, the other in the heart of the city, where he kept his five wives—was fully a mile from the house of the Prophet.

The reader will bear in mind that at the time of which we write, Salt Lake City had just been founded and was not the flourishing place that it is at the present day.

The elder at last arrived at the house, entered it, and went at once to the room where Margaret had been placed.

The two Indians, who had tracked him step by step, followed him to the very door, and then, as the closing portals shut the partly figure of the elder from their sight, they commenced a survey of the adjacent premises. The barred window of the room where Margaret was confined first caught their attention—the Yellow Wolf pointed it out to his companion.

Then the little clump of timber that fronted the window received their careful examination.

"From the trees we can look into the room," said the chief.

"Yes," replied the other, "let us see."

And with the agility of monkeys they ascended the tree; the foliage concealed them from view. As the chief had said, from the tree they commanded a view of the room. In the room was—as they had suspected—Margaret Miller!

The elder had just entered the room as the two Indians gained their position in the tree. Margaret had risen to her feet at the entrance of the Mormon, in indignant surprise.

"You are doubtless astonished at seeing me, my pretty dear," said the Mormon, insolently.

The hot blood of the girl tingled in her veins at his insulting manner.

"Perhaps, sir," she said, restraining her passion and speaking with cold dignity, "you can explain why I have been brought hither?"

"Of course I can, my dear," returned the elder, with a leer that made the heart of the young girl sink with terror. "In the first place I've had a revelation that commands me to take you for my wife."

"Your wife!" cried the maiden, hotly; "never!"

"Don't be in a hurry, my dear. Just wait till I ask for your consent, before you either refuse or give it. In this case I think we can get along without your opening your mouth at all."

"You will not use force?" cried the girl, in utter amazement, her pure mind unable to understand such a process.

"Not if you consent willingly, my dear; of course not," said the Mormon, with a chuckle.

"And if I do not consent?"

"Why then, my dear, I'm afraid I'll have to do without it."

"Then it was you who had me carried away by those men?"

"Exactly! You see I knew that you didn't know what was good for you, so I thought it better to put you where you could not be able to act like a foolish child, and refuse the worldly advantages I offer you."

"Oh, but you will suffer for this when some one learns the truth!" cried Margaret, with spirit.

"I suppose you refer to the young hunter Baldwin, eh?" said the elder, with a sneer. "Allow me then to leave the

pleasure of informing you that he is dead. He was drowned in the Green river the day before yesterday."

"You are wrong in what you say," said the girl, quietly, "for I myself saw him alive and well yesterday."

The elder stared at her in amazement.

"You are dreaming, girl; I tell you he is dead!" cried the elder.

"And I tell you, that it is you who are dreaming when you say that he is dead, for he is alive!" she said, firmly.

"Well, if you choose to believe it, do so if you think proper; but I tell you that he is dead; still, it doesn't make much difference, for alive or dead he would not be able to aid you," and the lip of the elder curled scornfully as he spoke.

"Now, my dear, I'll give you just one hour for reflection; at the end of that time you'll consent to be my wife or it will be the worse for you." And with this pleasant, parting salutation the elder withdrew.

Margaret's heart sunk within her. Was she indeed wholly in this man's power? Could nothing save her from the fate she dreaded far worse than death?

Mechanically she walked to the barred window and looked out upon the little thicket. Suddenly a face appeared before her eyes, half hidden by the leaves of the tree. 'Twas the Ute chief. He made a sign of encouragement, and then the face disappeared again amid the leaves.

Overcome with joy, Margaret sunk upon her knees and thanked Heaven for the aid that thus, at the eleventh hour, had come to save her.

What of the Danite chief? After repairing to his headquarters and leaving commands for his men, he took the road that led to the house of Higgins.

Dan had no suspicion that his footsteps were tracked; but it was so, for Eagle Plume had dogged him like a blood-hound.

The Danite entered the house, and Eagle Plume sought the little thicket as a place of ambush. In the thicket he found the Yellow Wolf and the Ute chief.

A short consultation took place between the three. The two Indians told what they had seen from their ambush in the tree-top.

"Wah!" said Eagle Plume at length; "we should be outside the house not out of it."

"How can we gain admittance?" asked the Yellow Wolf.

"I will knock at the door; the servant will come; one knife-thrust and the admittance is ours."

"Good; we will go," said the Yellow Wolf.

"Yes, for they might murder the poor girl and we on the outside would be none the wiser for it," cried the Ute chief.

All three proceeded to the door. Eagle Plume knocked once, low and cautiously, as he had noticed the Dakota leader do.

The door was opened by Grizzly Bear. Perceiving the face of the savage he would have closed it again, but the attempt came too late, for the iron fingers of the chief had clatched him by the throat, stifling all groans, and the straight, powerful thrust of the scalping-knife, driven home by the strong arm of the savage, had let out his life in one deep, gaping wound.

Laying the body down in the passage-way, the chief bent over it for a moment, knife in hand, and then rising, led the way cautiously through the narrow entry, the Yellow Wolf and the Ute chief following.

At the foot of the stairs the three halted.

"You can find the room where the girl is confined," said Eagle Plume to the Ute chief; "go up there at once. We are more than a match for all that are in the house; the Yellow Wolf and I will remain below. A warning of danger will call us to your side. When all is safe for our escape I will let you know; do not attempt to move till then," said the chief, warningly.

"Be satisfied, I will not."

So, cautiously up the stairs went the Ute chief, while the other two Indians remained below.

The Ute chief, proceeding with caution, soon stood before the door of Margaret's prison. A key was in the lock, the chief turned it and entered the room. Margaret looked up expecting to behold her persecutor; her joy knew no bounds when she saw who it was that had entered the apartment.

"Henry!" she cried, and joyfully sprang into his arms.

As our readers have doubtless guessed, the Ute chief was the young hunter in disguise.

"You know me then, Margaret?" he asked.

"Yes; I knew you when you first came to the Mormon camp in this disguise; I recognized you at once; but tell me, what is the meaning of it?" and the young girl looked fully into the face of her lover as she spoke.

Briefly, then, the hunter told of the attack made upon him by the Destroying Angels at the ford of the Green river.

"When the bullets whistled around," he said, "I saw that I had but one chance for life, and that was to seek refuge in the river; so down into the water I dived, receiving a wound in the shoulder as I did so. I am a capital swimmer, so under water I swam up-stream as long as I could and then came to the surface close to the bank; taking a long breath I again swam under water still farther up; this time I came to the surface right under some bushes that overhung the stream and they concealed me nicely. All this while, the Angels were watching the ford below, for me to reappear. Then at last they scouted down the stream in search of me. I did not dare to leave my ambush, for I expected each moment to see them return and search up the bank. At last they did return, but it was only to gallop off after the train, giving me up as dead. Then I essayed to leave my hiding place, but I found that I was quite weak from the loss of blood from the wound in my shoulder, and it took all my strength to lift myself from the water. The bank once gained, I felt that my strength was fast leaving me. I noised beyond a little cluster of bushes, and had just strength enough to walk to the clump and then I fainted. When I came to myself I found my two Indian friends, the Yellow Wolf and Eagle-Plume, bending over me. Under their simple treatment, I soon found myself quite strong again, for the wound in my shoulder was but a slight one. They procured me my disguise and suggested it, for I felt that I could not remain away from the camp and from you. Last night after the supposed Indian attack I found that you were missing; my Indian friends and myself at once followed on the trail and tracked you here, and, thank Heaven, we have come in time to rescue you from the power of these villains."

"I shall owe my life to you," said the girl, earnestly.

"I've no doubt that when I ask for payment you will cancel the debt," said the hunter.

Margaret answered the question by again casting herself into the arms of her lover.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORY OF THE DANITE.

EAGLE PLUME and the Yellow Wolf watched the Ute chief—or Baldwin, as we should call him—ascend the stairs. When he disappeared, the first-named turned to the Yellow Wolf:

"My brother, we must find some place of concealment where we can overhear all that goes on without being seen."

The Yellow Wolf nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Let us look."

They quickly discovered a dark recess under the stairs.

"It is good," said the Yellow Wolf, with an air of satisfaction.

And so the two chiefs hid themselves away in the gloom of the recess.

In the main room of the lower floor sat the Mormon elder and the Danite leader.

"Have you seen the girl yet?" asked Dan.

"Yes, about an hour ago," answered the Mormon.

"Well, how does she bear her captivity?"

"The girl has got a good deal of the devil in her," returned the elder. "She defies me."

"She does?"

"Yes; I shall have to use force with her, that's very plain."

"That's ugly," said the Danite.

"I've got a little scheme that I think will work. I'm going to draw a glass of wine and send it up to her. If she drinks it all till she's sleepy, and then I'll have to see her, being

or anybody save her from me," and the Mormon minister chuckled with delight as he spoke.

"You play well, Dan," said the Dane.

"Yes, I generally save 'em," he answered, calmly.

"Well, I've always found it said that the devil keeps his own," said the Minister of the Angels, sarcastically.

The Mormon laughed.

"Ah, Dan," he said, "you and I must be his chosen children, and a fine pair we are. By the way, this girl has got a strange idea in her head."

"Indeed? What is it?" asked Dan.

"Why, she believes that the young hunter, the Kentuckian, is still alive."

"The devil she does!" cried the Dane, in astonishment.

"Yes, she says that she saw him yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

"Yes, she is positive about it. Are you sure that you killed him?"

"Well, I saw him tumble off his horse into the river, and I'm sure he was hit, for the water was stained with blood," answered Dan.

"But, did you see his dead body?" asked the Mormon.

"No, I didn't," replied the Dane; "can't I tell you that he tumbled off his horse into the river, mortally wounded, and of course his body sank to the bottom?"

"But, are you sure that he was mortally wounded?"

"Well, as far as my own case is concerned, I've never felt from my wound as he hit me, and I don't generally have to die twice at the same man."

"Yet she declares that she saw him yesterday alive; she has no motive to trick or mislead about the matter; by some means he must have come up," said the Dane.

"I'll be hanged if I," returned the Dane. "I've been in as tight a fix myself in my time, and yet got out of it."

"Yes, but, then, how is it possible he may be alive?" said the Mormon elder, uneasily.

"You, if you can't help it, may see him, you may depend upon it," said the Dane, positively. "I say, child, it isn't my business to tell you to believe if the hunter is alive and call you to account for this little business. Do you

think the girl is worth an ounce of lead or a slash of a Bowie-knife?" and the Destroying Angel smiled grimly as he put the question.

The Mormon elder grew pale at the very thought. Bravery was not one of his virtues—that is, if he possessed any virtues, which is doubtful.

"Well, I don't know," he said, slowly; "a pretty woman, to a man who cares for such things, is sometimes worth a great deal more than the mere risk of personal danger. I don't doubt that you've often risked your life for something of that sort."

"Yes, you are right," returned the Angel, "I have. It was a woman who made me what I am now, the leader of the Danites and the destroying sword of the Prophet."

"How was it?" asked the elder, inquisitively. "I have never heard you speak of your past life; how was it that you came to leave the States?"

"Oh, it's the old story. I was clerk in a banking house in New York. I got into bad company, robbed my employers, was detected and obliged to fly. I came West; got in with a lot of gamblers, but nothing seemed to prosper with me; where other men won, I could only lose. Then I took a step downward, and joined a band of counterfeiters and horse-thieves. For the first time in my life I was successful. I became the head of the band; we operated in the river counties of Kentucky and Ohio. For five years we succeeded in baffling all the efforts of the officers of justice to capture us or break up our band; but, at last, the citizens organized a vigilance committee, and then it was all up with us; they hunted us down like wild beasts; the band was dispersed, and again I was obliged to fly for my life; this time, however, I had considerable money. It was a narrow shave for life, for descriptions of my personal appearance were circulated all over the country. I was obliged to disguise myself, but that was easy enough. I bought a bottle of hair-dye, and by the use of it turned my hair from its bright yellow into a deep black. Of course this entirely destroyed my identity. Why, I put up at the same tavern with the men who were in pursuit of me, sat at the same table with them, and heard them speculate upon the chances of capturing me. Finally I reached

a small town on the Mississippi river. I hadn't exactly made up my mind where to go, so I resolved to remain there a few days. During my stay in the town, I became acquainted with a young girl; she was about as pretty a creature as I ever laid my eyes upon. As was but natural, I took a fancy to her. She loved me, and at last consented to fly with me. I took her to Council Bluffs; in a short time I became wearied with her; she discovered that I was not exactly the angel that her fancy had painted me to be, and at last her tears and complaints made me angry. I resolved to get rid of her. As chance would have it, just as I had formed that resolution, a stranger whom I was fleeing at play one day accused me of cheating; I gave him the lie and a fight followed. My life had taught me to be quick with my weapons, and so I shot him dead on the spot. This was a little too much even for the citizens of Council Bluffs to stand; there was talk of a vigilance committee, so, to use the western saying, I 'lit out.' All this time, mind you, I had kept my hair black; but shortly after I left Council Bluffs I met one of my old partners from the Bluffs, who told me something that made it necessary again for me to change my name and personal appearance; so I shaved my head clean, and of course, when the hair grew out again, it was yellow, its natural color."

The Mormon elder had listened to the story with interest.

"What was the news you heard that caused you to do this?" he asked.

"I'll tell you," the Danite answered. "When I fled from Council Bluffs, of course I left the girl that I had brought with me, there, glad in fact to get rid of her. A short time after my flight, she—poor, weak fool—pined away and died. A gentleman, passing through the Bluffs when she was on her death bed, in some way heard her story and went to see her. This man took a strange interest in the girl, looked after her as carefully as if he had been her own brother—she died in his arms; the man, they say, was almost wild with grief, and, by the body of the dead girl, he swore a terrible oath that he would hunt me through the world until he had avenged her death."

"Well, he did take a strange interest," said the elder.

"Yes; this threat of the stranger was the news my old

partner brought, and he advised me to look out for the man, for it was evident that he was in earnest. I came to Salt Lake City, joined the Destroying Angels, became their captain, and then I felt powerful enough to defy the notice of any one man, even if he were half devil."

"You have never seen this man?"

"No," replied the Darrite; "but I have a presentiment that those two blows, each one of which has cost one my own life, were intended for me, and came from this man. I have noticed that both the men slain had black hair, such as mine was—and with such hair I was probably described to this person."

The elder gave a nervous shudder.

"It would give me the horrors to know that I had such a bitter, unrelenting foe on my track!" he exclaimed.

"Well, the feeling is not a pleasant one," returned Dan; "but why this stranger took such an interest in the girl puzzle's sake?"

"Perhaps he was some distant relation of hers," suggested the elder.

"Oh, no!" cried the Darrite; "the girl came of Kentucky stock. She had two brothers; the elder went off when a boy, and as he was not heard of afterward, was supposed to have died in foreign lands; the other was a hunter in the Rocky Mountain region. I have come to the conclusion that it was only one of those strange whims that sometimes seize upon men."

"What makes you think that those deaths are the work of this avenger?" asked the Mormon.

"Why, from the peculiar manner in which they have been killed," answered the Darrite; "there are no marks of violence on the bodies, except a little red ring around the throat, and a couple of knife-slashes forming the letter L."

"I don't exactly see how, from such marks as these, you can lay the case to the hand of this person," said the elder.

"Is it not plain that the men have been strangled to death?—strangled by a noose cast over their heads—and is not the lasso the national weapon of the Mexican?" asked the Darrite.

"This person I was told by my friend, but he just came in from Santa Fé, and I probably was a Mexican or Texan, in which case the lasso would be his natural weapon."

"Yes: that is true," said the Mormon, thoughtfully. "It's a most mysterious occurrence. But how could he follow our train, and know the exact moment to spring upon his victim?"

"That's what puzzles me," said Dan, his brows darkening. "As I have said, it seems more like the work of a demon than that of a man."

"And what can be his idea in marking the bodies on the arm with the letter L?" said the elder.

"I can not guess," answered Dan, shortly; but in this he felt, for, in his own heart, he had guessed the meaning of that mark.—he knew the terrible warning conveyed.

"By the way!" cried the elder, suddenly, "that hunter Belknap was a dangerous man; could he have had any thing to do with these mysterious murders?"

"No," returned the leader of the Angels, thoughtfully; "it is only one of those strange coincidences that sometimes occur in this world. I confess, at first I suspected the hunter, but now I am satisfied that he had nothing to do with it."

"Well, it's strange!" cried the Mormon.

"Yes, it is; and the strangeness is what makes it so terrible. If I could see this foe that is striking such deadly blows at me, he would lose half his terror; but, as it is, I am acting in the dark. At first, I thought these two Indians—Eagle-Plume and Yellow Wolf—had something to do with it; but the foot-print in the sand, that this secret demon left when in the night he hovered around our camp, was never made by the foot of an Indian. Besides, these red-skins have no motive."

"That's true," said the elder.

"I think, however, that, here in the city, I am safe from this man, or devil—whatever he is—that is tracking me so closely. He will hardly dare to come here."

"I gave the girl an hour to reflect upon her position," said the elder; "the time is about up. I guess I'll visit her, and see if she hasn't made up her mind to accept my offer."

"And if you find her still obstinate?"

"I'll try a nice little bottle of wine; that'll fix her," said the Mormon, with a chuckle.

"Well, I wish you luck. Take care that she don't cost you more than she's worth."

"What do you mean?" asked the elder, rising.

"Why, if the young hunter is alive, and learns the fate of his lady-love, he may seek vengeance upon you."

The Danite evidently desired to frighten the Mormon.

"I'll risk it," the elder replied with the air of a bravo, though his cheek grew a shade paler as he spoke.

"You may need help—just call on me," said the Danite, with a sarcastic smile.

"Help?" cried the elder. "Well, I think I can manage a single woman without calling in the aid of the Destroying Angels."

With this parting remark, the elder left the room and ascended the stairs to the prison of Margaret.

Arriving at the door he laid his hand on the lock; he saw, to his utter astonishment, that the key had been turned; the door, that he had felt certain he had locked behind him on leaving the room, was now unlocked. The elder was puzzled.

"The devil!" he muttered; "could I have been careless enough to have left it this way? I thought sure that I had locked it. I can't understand it."

A moment he remained in deep thought.

"It's all right, anyway," at last he said; "she couldn't have got out of the house, even if she had escaped from the room."

Then the elder opened the door, and entered. A single glance around the room reassured him. Margaret was seated by the little table exactly as he had left her upon his former visit.

The dull eyes of the elder did not notice the joyous gleam of the girl's dark eyes, the brightened color of her cheeks and face. All he saw was that she was there, in his power—at his mercy.

"Well, Miss Margaret," he said, casting glances of admiration upon her that made her blood tingle with anger in her veins, "the hour that I gave you for reflection has elapsed. I hope you have made up your mind to walk in the broad, straight path of righteousness, and forsake the evil ways of

the Gentiles!" and the elder devoutly rolled his eyes upward as he spoke.

"No, sir; I have not changed my mind in the least," answered the girl.

"I am sorry for it," returned the Mormon with a shake of the head. "I am sorry to see one so young welded to the ways of Satan. Oh! young girl, let me take you by the hand and lead you in the path of grace;" and the elder advanced toward her as he spoke. A noise behind him stayed his footsteps; but, on looking around, he saw it was only the door of the little closet in the room that had swayed open a little.

Margaret had risen to her feet at the movement of the elder, yet, strange to say, she did not seem to be much alarmed.

"I have given you my answer, sir," she said; "and if you are a gentleman, you will be satisfied with it."

"Can you doubt that?" he asked, reproachfully. "Do you not see that I am actuated solely by a desire for your welfare, carnal as well as spiritual? Perverse girl, you are walking in the path of evil; you are a brand in the fire of iniquity; shall I not pluck you forth and save you from the fire eternal? Yes! I have had a revelation that commands me to make you my wife, and one of the chosen of Zion. Let me place upon your lips the seal of our faith, in a pure and holy kiss."

And with outstretched arms the Mormon elder advanced to the startled girl. Just as he thought his triumph secure—just as he was about to clasp her in his arms, he felt a hand of iron grip him by the throat; a second more and he lay on the floor beneath the knee of an Indian—whom he recognized as the Ute chief, and who held a glittering knife close to his throat.

CHAPTER XIV.

FATE.

After the elder left the room, the leader of the Angels remained for a while in gloomy abstraction; his thoughts were busy with schemes to capture and destroy the terrible foe that he felt certain was following remorselessly on his track.

The entrance of Red Dick interrupted the Danite's meditations.

"I say, capt'n," said the rufian, "have you see'd Joe anywhar?"

"No," answered Dan.

"You hain't sent him off anywhar?"

"No," a second time answered the Danite chief.

"Wa-al, I can't find him round anywhar."

"Can't find him?"

"No, neither hide nor ha'r."

"He surely would not leave the house without orders!" exclaimed the Danite.

"That's jist what I thought, but I can't find him," returned Dick.

"Have you looked to see if the outer door was unfastened?" Dan asked.

"No, capt'n, I hain't."

"Let us see at once, then."

The two left the room and proceeded to the outer door; close by the door, lying on his back on the floor, they found Grizzly Joe—dead.

The two men looked at each other in terror.

"Who can have done this?" cried the leader of the Angels.

"The devil himself I should think!" said the brawny rufian, in a subdued tone.

"See if the door is locked!" cried Dan.

Dick obeyed the order.

"No, capt'n, it's unlocked!"

"The man then who did this deed has evidently escaped;

and to kill Joe so quietly, without even a struggle to alarm the house, I can not understand it," said the Danite, slowly.

Dick knelt down by the side of the body.

"One straight poke settled poor Joe, an' on the throat, cap'n, there are marks as if he had been choked."

"Look on the left arm!" cried Dan, a dim fear beginning to take possession of him, that the invisible foe had again been at his deadly work.

Dick whistled in astonishment.

"What's the matter?"

"Why, the sleeve has been slit open from the wrist to the shoulder, and on the muscular part of the arm two knife-cuts make the letter L."

Cold drops of sweat stood on the forehead of the leader of the Destroying Angels; 'twas the third time he had heard that announcement—the third time that the secret foe had marked his victim! The blows were coming nearer and nearer; the Danite had a presentiment that the next one would be aimed at his own life. The now desperate man mentally asked himself if there was no escape from this invisible danger.

"What do you think of it cap'n?" resumed the rebel.

"I don't know what to think," returned Dan, nervously.

"Perhaps the elder may know something about it," suggested Dick,

"No, it is not likely. How Joe could be killed without even a struggle I can not understand."

"Why, they caught him by surprise and put a knife into him before he had time to utter; it must have been a powerful big fellow, and as strong as a bull, to have given him that cut."

"Remain here and keep your eyes on the door while I see the elder. This matter must be explained; we must die over this danger or he'll murder us one by one."

Saying which the Danite went up-stairs and left Dick alone with the body—a position he by no means relished, for, like all his kind, he was superstitious and at times cowardly.

"Beats!" he muttered to himself as his leader disappeared up the stairs. "If I saw him what's to prevent the fellow what give Joe this ugly poke from coming and giving me one too? Keep my eyes on the door, he said. Well, I kin do that outside as well as in, so I'll jist git out; if any one tackles

me that, I shall have room to either fight or run as the case may be—I ain't goin' to stay here no longer, that's flat." So the prudent ruffian opened the door and placed himself as a sentry outside. Scarcely had the door closed behind him when the two Indians emerged from their hiding-place under the stairs and noiselessly and with extreme caution followed in the footsteps of the Danite chief up the stairs.

We will now return to the Mormon elder, whom we left prostrate on the floor, held down by the knee of the Ute chief.

The astonishment and terror of the elder at his sudden downfall knew no bounds, and the glittering knife put close to his throat, coupled with the threatening eyes of the Indian, did not tend to lessen his fright.

"Utter a single sound, you infernal villain, and the knife is in your throat!" hissed the savage.

The elder opened his eyes still wider in astonishment. The few words revealed all to him; he knew why the voice and face of the Ute chief had seemed so familiar to him; he knew now—too late—that the Ute brave was the hunter Baldwin in disguise; he uttered a suppressed groan; he knew that he was fully in the power of the man to whom he had shown no mercy, and it was not likely that mercy now would be shown him.

Baldwin's sudden appearance is easily explained; he had heard the elder coming up the stairs and unwilling to risk a contest until he knew the number of his foes, had taken refuge in the closet; from that convenient ambush he had been able to spring upon the Mormon elder unperceived.

"You are the hunter, Baldwin," murmured the terror-stricken elder in a whisper, afraid to speak loud lest the terrible knife should enter his throat and put a stop to his talking forever.

"Yes," said the hunter, "I am the man whom you and the Destroying Angels attempted to assassinate, and I am an avenger now of my own wrongs and those of this outraged girl."

"No, no!" murmured the elder; "I had nothing to do with it, I assure you."

"You lie!" said the hunter, sternly.

"No, no!" said the elder, fearing his last hour had come; "I did not injure you."

"No, you were too cowardly to expose your precious person, but you paid others to attack me. The Destroying Angels only carried out your orders; they were your tools, you black-hearted villain," and the quivering Mormon felt the keen point of the steel prick his throat, and his usually red cheeks were as pale as a sheet.

"Oh, spare me!" he moaned. "I will do any thing for you, only spare me!"

The hunter gazed with contempt on the white face of the trembling wretch.

"Will you swear never again to persecute this girl with your attentions?" demanded the hunter, sternly.

"Yes, yes," replied the elder, willing to swear to any thing, willing to do any thing to save his body from harm.

"You promise never again to molest this young lady, or to mention what has taken place here to-day?"

"Yes, yes; I will do any thing you wish." The elder thought he saw a chance for life.

"Now, then, I am going to let you up; but, mind, if you utter a single sound to alarm the house, I'll drive my knife through your foul body," said the hunter.

"I won't speak above a whisper," replied the elder, humbly.

The hunter rose to his feet; crestfallen, the elder followed his example. He saw that his prey was about to escape him; he could only prevent it at the risk of personal damage, and that risk the elder did not dare to encounter.

The hunter saw that triumph was within his grasp; by the aid of the Mormon—that aid which he should force him to grant—he and Margaret could easily escape from the house.

"Now," said the hunter, but his speech was cut short by the sudden opening of the door and the entrance of the Destroying Angel. The elder of the Angels comprehended the situation in a moment. With the spring of a tiger he dashed upon the hunter and bore him to the floor. Taken by surprise the hunter did not have a chance to use his knife. The Destroyer's grip was like that of a vice; powerful as was the hunter he was no match for the leader of the Destroying Angels; the elder, too, lent his assistance; he procured a small

piece of rope from the closet, and the two bound the hunter's arms tightly behind him; Margaret, woman-like, had fainted at the beginning of the struggle.

The hunter lay upon the floor, bound; and the Danite leader stood by him with a grim smile. The elder bore the fainting girl and laid her down carefully upon the bed; the tables had turned and she was again in his power.

"Who is this fellow?" said Dan, for he had not recognized the hunter.

"Why, the hunter Baldwin?" exclaimed the elder.

"Ah!" cried the Danite, "so it is! You escaped me the other day at the ford of the Green river. I hardly fancy that you will be able to repeat that operation a second time."

The hunter replied not to the taunt.

"By the way, I believe you are in search of a certain man, who, you think, is one of the Destroying Angels; is it not so?" asked Dan.

"Yes," coldly replied the hunter. "How knew you of it?"

"What is the reason that impels you to seek this man?" questioned the Danite, without replying to the hunter's question.

"Why should I tell you?" asked the hunter.

"Because I can aid you in your search," replied the chief of the Angels.

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

"Do you think I am a fool?" said the hunter. "I know very well that alive I shall never leave this place. You wish my death; I am in your power; I must sell it."

"And you are content, eh?" said the Danite, with a sneer.

"Because I can not help myself."

"Granting what you say be true—that you will never leave this place alive—which is likely, what matters it whether your secret is known or not?" asked the leader of the Angels.

"True," answered the hunter, "it does not make much difference; and in that case, I may as well hold my tongue as speak."

"Perhaps," said the Danite, slowly. "But I had an idea that it might be some gratification to you to see the man you

are in search of, even though your mission was fruitless. Besides, you may escape from our hands; I don't think it likely that you will; but still, you may. Some strange chance may aid you; you will then know all you seek to know, if you speak now."

The hunter looked at the Danite keenly.

"Why are you so anxious to learn my secret?" the hunter asked.

"A whim of mine, that's all; all men have strange fancies at times, you know," answered Dan. "You seek a man who bears on his left arm the letter L in India ink?"

"How did you know that?" asked the hunter in unfeigned astonishment.

"Never mind," replied Dan. "Enough that I do know it. Do you not seek such a man?"

"Yes," said the hunter, "I do."

"I'll make a bargain with you," cried the Danite. "Tell me why you seek this man and I'll show him to you."

"Here?"

"Yes, here."

"Then, listen, for it's a bargain. The man who bears on his left arm the letter L pricked in with India ink, I seek because he is the heartless villain who robbed me of a sister, and broke her heart by desertion," said the hunter, in a low, deep voice.

The Danite started as though bitten by a snake; he looked at the hunter earnestly.

"What was your sister's name?" he asked.

"Ethel," answered the hunter.

"Ah!" and again the Danite started; "your name then is not Baldwin?"

"No," replied the hunter, "my name is Henry Hastings. And now," he continued, "fulfill your promise; show me the man that I have tracked across the prairie."

"Look at me," said the Danite.

"Well?" questioned the hunter.

"I am the man you seek!"

"You?"

"Yes, I! I am Luther Hardwicke; I confess I did wrong your sister" said the Danite.

"You are lying!" cried the hunter.

"No, I speak truth; you are in my power, therefore I do not fear you, and so I speak freely. You have trailed me as the sleuth-hound tracks its prey, and the path has led you to your death. You think I am deceiving you; see?" Then the leader of the Angels stripped off the hunting-shirt that he wore, rolled up the left sleeve of the flannel shirt, and exposed his arm bare to the elbow. "See!" he cried, "the mark you seek!" and there, plainly imprinted on the arm in blue, was the letter L. "Will you believe me now?" cried the Danite. "Again I tell you I am Luther Hardwicke, the betrayer of your sister, Ethel Hastings, and your executioner."

Triumph swelled the voice of the leader of the Destroying Angels as he spoke.

"Luther Hardwicke, horse-thief, betrayer of innocence, murderer, you have spoken the words that seal your doom!" cried a loud voice, intense with hate.

All turned; in the door-way, knife in hand, stood the Indian, Eagle Plume, while close behind him came the Yellow Wolf.

"The Dacotah chief! What mean you?" questioned the Danite, thunderstruck at this sudden appearance.

"You are wrong; I am not a Dacotah, but a white man like yourself. I am the so-called Mexican in whose arms your victim, Ethel Hastings, died. I am the man who has followed on your track like an avenging demon; three of the Destroying Angels have fallen beneath my knife, mistaken by me for you; on each dead ruffian have I left my mark, the letter L; to hunt you down I became a Dacotah, but now my mission is ended. Devil that you are, your last hour has come! I am the elder brother of the girl you murdered—my name is Edwin Hastings—prepare for death!" and then, with the bound of the tiger, the avenger sprang upon the Destroying Angel. A single knife-thrust—vain was the attempt to parry the terrible blow—and Luther Hardwicke fell dying to the floor; a few convulsive motions and the guilty soul of the bold, bad man, the leader of the Destroying Angels—the Danite chief—fled from the earth to meet its Judge.

Calmly and grimly Edwin Hastings watched the death-throes of the leader of the Angels.

The elder, Higgins, had looked upon the scene with speechless terror.

Margaret by this time had recovered her senses, and seeing the two men, and her lover free—for the Yellow Wolf had unbound him—she knew that she was saved.

Warm was the greeting between the two brothers who had been separated so long, but whom a common cause had brought together.

Eagle Plume, or Edwin Hastings, as we should call him, made preparations for an instant departure.

The elder was locked in the room that had served as the prison for Margaret, for both the brothers disdained to strike at the life of such a cur as he had shown himself to be, and he was warned that if he gave an alarm, within, at least, two hours, it would be the worse for him; then by the door leading from the rear of the house the party gained the open air.

In the city they procured their horses, and in an hour after leaving the house of the Mormon elder, the little party were in full gallop over the prairie eastward.

"Will not the Angels attempt a pursuit?" asked the younger Hastings.

"Let them, and they will be met by all the red warriors of the Dacotah nation," was the stern reply of the adopted son of that tribe.

But the Mormons did not attempt a pursuit. Higgins was only too glad to have the entire matter hushed up, for he dreaded the vengeance of the Dacotahs.

The Yellow Wolf and Edwin Hastings accompanied the young hunter and his promised bride to the Missouri river, opposite Council Bluffs, and there turned their horses again toward the prairie. During the journey, Edwin Hastings had told how, in returning home from New Mexico, he had accidentally met his sister abandoned by her destroyer, and of his oath of vengeance and search for the villain; how he had secured one of the sons of the Dacotah tribe to aid in the search.

"Will you not come home with us, brother?" Margaret asked, as they were about to part.

"No, my home is there," and Eagle Plume—to give him

his Indian title—pointed to the west, where the setting sun tinged the clouds with ruddy light; “the Red Pawn waits for her lord by the shadows of the great mountains; my heart now is red; I am a Dacotah warrior, and I will live and die on the prairie. Good-by!”

And the two chiefs soon disappeared in the distance.

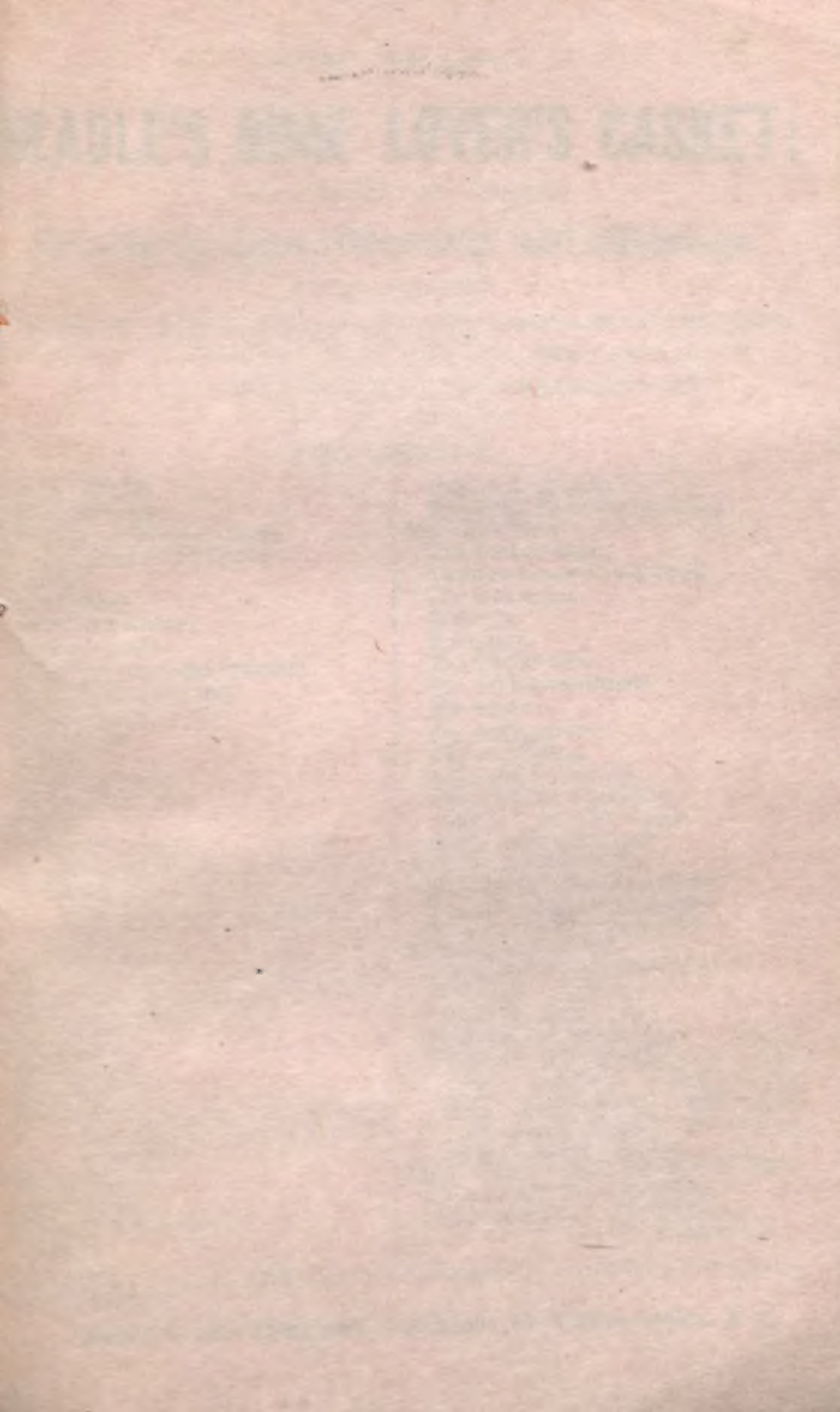
Henry Hastings and Margaret were married, and soon settled down in the pleasant Illinois village—Hastings’ early home—that nestled on the bank of the great Mississippi.

Miller and his wife settled contentedly in Salt Lake City; Miller became a Mormon throughout, and wives were “sealed” to him; and though Kate, his first wife, made no complaints, and seemed contented, yet her cheek is paler far than when she dwelt, the wife of a poor man, in the Ohio village.

The Mormon elder, Higgins, attained to a high position in the church, and became a shining light for the young men of the New Zion.

Years after the time of our story, when the Prophet, Young, became embroiled with the United States Government, and war was expected, he sought the aid of the powerful tribe of Dacotahs. His treaty of alliance was rejected, solely through the influence of two great warriors, the Yellow Wolf and Eagle Plume.

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